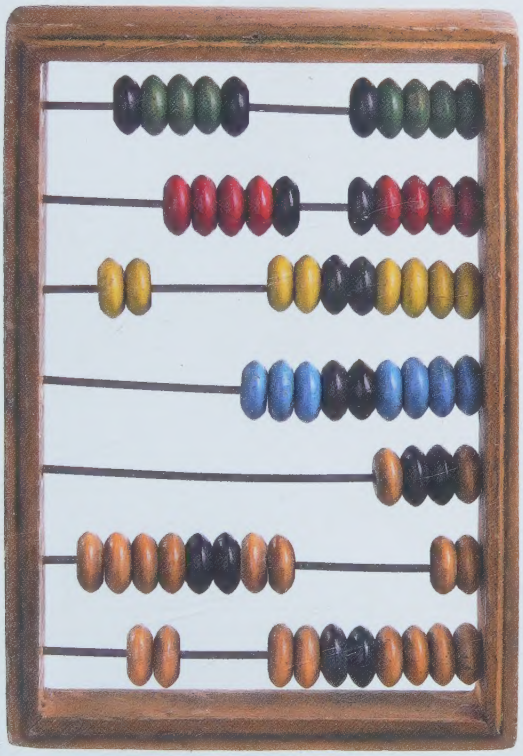
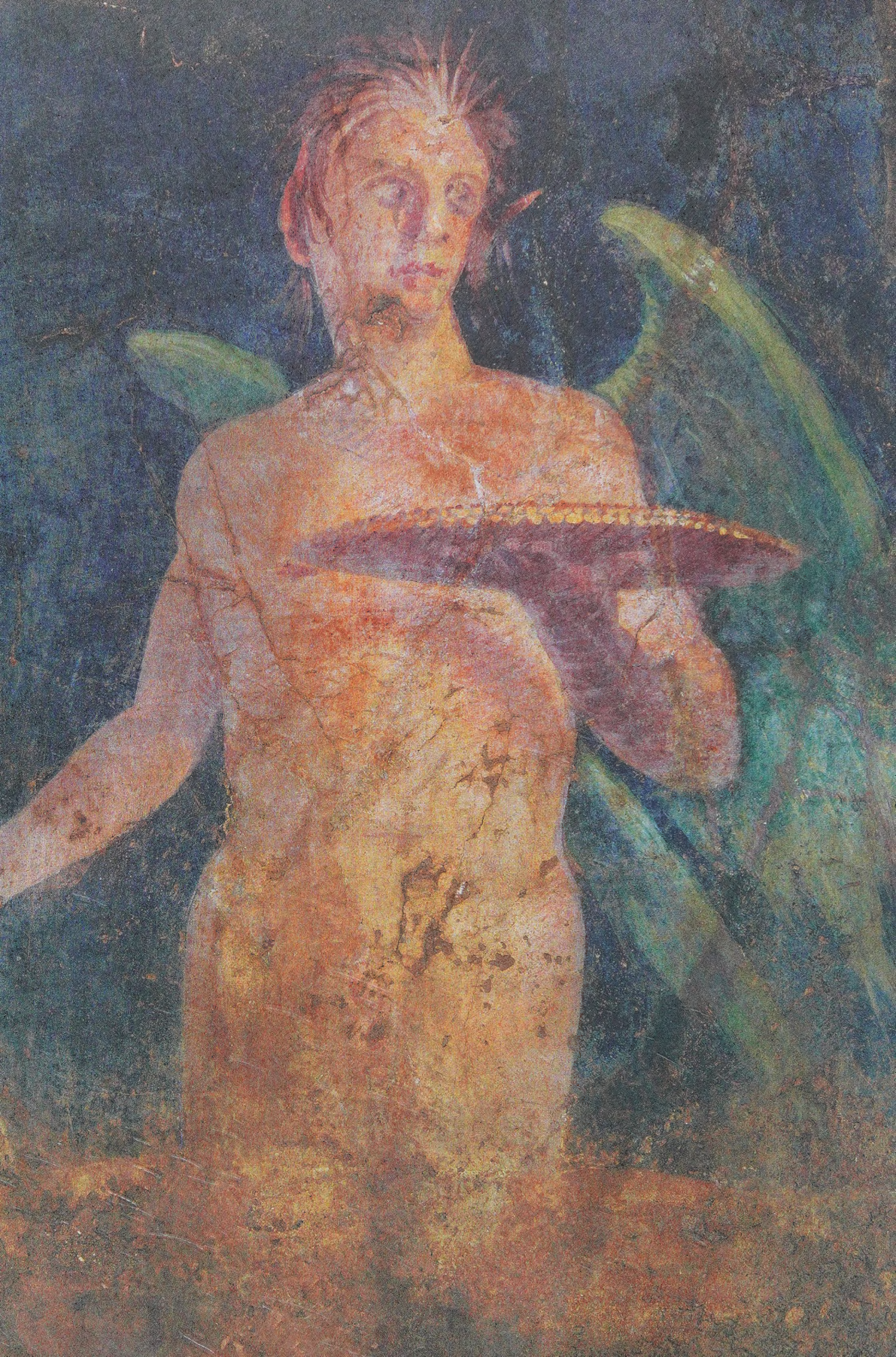
LAPHAM'S QUARTERLY

VOLUME I, NUMBER 4

FALL 2008



WAYS OF LEARNING



LAPHAM'S
QUARTERLY

Human history becomes more and more a race
between education and catastrophe.
—H.G. Wells, 1920

Winged Genius, fresco in Boscoreale, Italy, first century BC.

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LAPHAM'S
QUARTERLY

WAYS OF LEARNING

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THE HYPOTHESIS 1818: CHARLOTTESVILLE 28. THOMAS JEFFERSON
C. 1130: FRANCE 30. PETER ABÉLARD
1987: CHICAGO 34. ALLAN BLOOM
1375: ALGERIA 34. IBN KHALDUN
1854: DUBLIN 36. CARDINAL JOHN HENRY NEWMAN
1975: PARIS 37. MICHEL FOUCAULT
1807: BERLIN 38. JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE
1983: WASHINGTON, D.C. 39. NATIONAL COMMISSION
1936: THE NETHERLANDS 40. MARIA MONTESSORI
1884: INDIANA 41. ZITKALA-SA
1776: BOSTON 42. ABIGAIL ADAMS
1938: NEW YORK CITY 44. JOHN DEWEY
1179: ROME 44. THIRD LATERAN COUNCIL
1982: SAN FRANCISCO 46. RICHARD RODRIGUEZ
1910: CHICAGO 49. JANE ADDAMS
1965: CAMBRIDGE 50. FAYE LEVINE
2004: BESLAN 52. ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA
1957: LITTLE ROCK 53. PARENTS OF LITTLE ROCK NINE
C. 580 BC: PERSIA 54. XENOPHON
1903: TUSKEGEE 55. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

Voices in Time

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1962: OXFORD 58. W.H. AUDEN

1988: PINYUDO 59. DAVE EGGERS

C. 796: TOURS 61. ALCUIN OF YORK

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1621: OXFORD 63. ROBERT BURTON

1903: CAMBRIDGE 65. WILLIAM JAMES

1995: PARRIS ISLAND 69. THOMAS E. RICKS

C. 1912: SUSSEX 72. GEORGE ORWELL

THE EXPERIMENT C. 90: ROME 75. QUINTILIAN

1826: BALTIMORE 77. FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1924: SEATTLE 79. MARY MCCARTHY

403: BETHLEHEM 82. JEROME

C. 1926: MADRID 84. SALVADOR DALÍ

1960: SAN QUENTIN 85. ELDRIDGE CLEAVER

423 BC: ATHENS 87. ARISTOPHANES

C. 1918: BROOKFIELD 91. JAMES HILTON

C. 105: ROME 92. JUVENAL

1955: MINNESOTA 94. DON DELILLO

1916: NOVA SCOTIA 98. ELIZABETH BISHOP

C. 1745: ST. PETERSBURG 100. CATHERINE THE GREAT

1981: NEW YORK CITY 101. DONALD BARTHELME

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1762: MONTMORENCY 106. JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

1637: LEIDEN 107. RENÉ DESCARTES

C. 500 BC: LU 110. CONFUCIUS

C. 1490: MILAN 111. LEONARDO DA VINCI

1946: GREENWICH VILLAGE 112. ANATOLE BROYARD

1928: DUBLIN 114. WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

1803: KÖNIGSBERG 116. IMMANUEL KANT

C. 500 BC: INDIA 116. THE DHAMMAPADA

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The Problem We All Live With, by Norman Rockwell, 1964.

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182. King Saud University. Photograph by Christopher Morris.
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197. *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, c. 1797.
200. Violin tutorial, 1756.
206. French teacher lectures about birds, 1903.
211. *The Wounded Man*, by Gustave Courbet, c. 1844–1854.
217. *The Fisherman*, by Carl Schuster.
220–221. A Short History of Schooling.
IBC. Statue of Buddha, found in 1923.

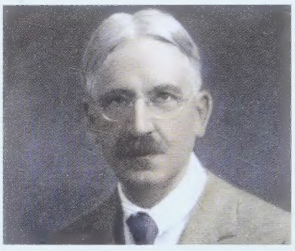
Among the Contributors

The Greek philosopher **Plato** (427–347 BC) founded the Academy in Athens, regarded as the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. Aristotle, his best student, described Plato as a man "whom it is blasphemy in the base even to praise."

In 1943 William Faulkner wrote to **Eudora Welty** (1909–2001) after reading one of her early short stories to say, "You're doing all right." When Welty's collected works were admitted to The Library of America series in 1998, she was the first living writer to be accorded the honor.

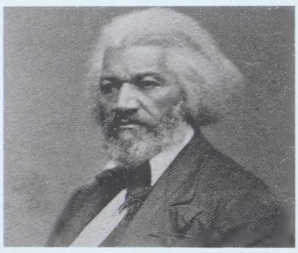
"It would be the irony of fate if my administration had to deal chiefly with foreign affairs." So said **Woodrow Wilson** (1856–1924), speaking to a friend before his inauguration in 1913 as the twentieth century's first Democratic president. Four years later, Wilson led the country into World War I with the thought of constructing what he subsequently described as a "new world order."

Dutch humanist **Desiderius Erasmus** (c. 1466–1536) is considered the greatest scholar of the Northern Renaissance. Orphaned at a young age, he entered monastic schools where, over a term of seven years, he found little solace in the teaching of the monks. "They believe it's the highest form of piety to be so uneducated that they can't even read."



After two years as a high school teacher in Oil City, Pennsylvania, and another in Charlotte, Vermont, **John Dewey** (1859–1952) decided he was better suited for graduate school. In 1882 he borrowed five hundred dollars from his aunt and enrolled at Johns Hopkins University, where he wrote "The Psychology of Kant," his unpublished and now missing thesis. By 1916 he had published *Democracy and Education* and had come to be known as one of the country's leading voices of pragmatist philosophy.

Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–1890) was a leading figure in the nineteenth-century Oxford Movement to return the Church of England to its Catholic roots. Until his religious conversion at the age of fifteen, he suspected that life was a dream, that he was himself an angel, and that his fellow angels were deceiving him with the appearance of a material world.



Frederick Douglass (c. 1817–1895) held a succession of federal offices, among them minister resident and consul general to the Republic of Haiti. Abraham Lincoln praised him as the "most meritorious man of the nineteenth century."

Jane Addams (1860–1935) opened America's first settlement house in Chicago's slums in 1889 and recruited educated women like her to live among the poor they served. "Nothing could be worse than the fear that one had given up too soon," she wrote, "and left one unexpended effort that might have saved the world."

Revered by both Benito Mussolini and Donald Trump for his theory of realpolitik, the Florentine diplomat **Niccolò Machiavelli** (1469–1527) was arrested in 1513 on suspicion of plotting against the Medici rulers of the city. After being tortured, he was exiled for fourteen years to his country estate at San Casciano, where he continued to dress himself in his official robes while writing *The Mandrake*, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*, and *The Prince*.

Having served nearly nine years in prison for assault with intent to commit murder, **Eldridge Cleaver** (1935–1998) was released on parole in 1966 when Norman Mailer petitioned for his release. Afterward, Cleaver published the best-selling book *Soul on Ice* in 1968, became a prominent civil rights leader, joined the Black Panther Party, formed an addiction to cocaine, followed Reverend Sun Myung Moon, designed men's trousers, became a Republican, and, finally, converted to Mormonism.

Mary McCarthy (1912–1989) modeled characters after herself and fellow Vassar College graduates in her satirical novel *The Group*, published in 1963. As an early editor of *Partisan Review*, she wrote theater criticism, flirted with Trotskyism, and was noted for her commentaries on marriage and sexual expression. She married four times, most conspicuously to the noted American author and literary critic Edmund Wilson.

The Italian soldier and diplomat **Baldassare Castiglione** (1478–1529) wrote three drafts of *The Courtier* as a handbook describing the qualities of the perfect Renaissance gentleman before it was published in 1528 under the protection of the Duke of Urbino. Castiglione died of a sudden illness in Toledo; at his funeral, Emperor Charles V said, "I tell you one of the best caballeros of the world is dead."

German playwright, director, and poet **Bertolt Brecht** (1898–1956), a lifelong Marxist, founded the Berliner Ensemble and invented "epic theater," which envisioned the stage as a forum for social change. "When I read Marx's *Kapital*, I understood my plays," he said. Brecht spent his mature creative years exiled and almost penniless.

The Spanish Catalan painter **Salvador Dalí** (1904–1989) explored the human subconscious as a space remarkable for its soft, melting watches and decomposed donkeys lying in pianos. He gained prominence in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a member of the Surrealist movement.

The Chinese philosopher **Confucius** (551–479 BC) established teaching as a vocation and sought to bring an education to students of all social ranks and classes. He never considered himself a religious figure and he died convinced that his teachings would die with him.

The Art of Knowing

CARTOGRAPHY

1 — c. 1500 BC
2 — c. 600 BC
3 — 150

Punjab: Sacred Hindu texts describe earth as a terrestrial plane surrounding a mountain at the center of the cosmos

Nippur, Iraq: Neo-Babylonian world map developed, depicting a disk-shaped earth surrounded by water and the Unknown

Alexandria: Ptolemy maps the "known world" of Europe, Asia, and Africa

WRITING

1 — c. 3300 BC
2 — c. 3000 BC
3 — c. 1500 BC
105
2nd c

Sumer: Priests invent pictographic symbols to keep records of property and business dealings

Egypt: Papyrus first used as a writing surface

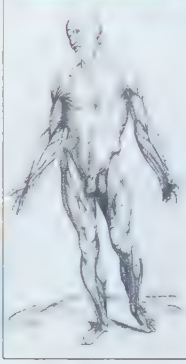
Syria: Canaanites convert Egyptian alphabet from pictographs to phonetic symbols

China: Han Dynasty court eunuch Cai Lun invents paper, replacing bamboo tablets and bolts of silk

Pergamum: Parchment first used as writing surface

Baghdad: First known paper mill born of Islamic Golden Age

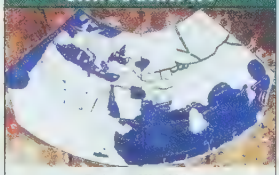
AUTOPSY



Even now, it is only in the autopsy room that the true courage of the human body is apparent, the way it carries on in the face of all odds. arteriosclerosis, calculi, pulmonary fibrosis, softening of the brain. And still the body goes on day after day, bearing its burdens, if not jauntily, at least with acceptance and obedience until at last it must sink beneath the weight of those burdens and come to the morgue where its faithfulness can be observed and granted homage.
—Richard Selzer, "The Language of Pain," 1994

Anatomical drawing by Andreas Vesalius, 1543.

CARTOGRAPHY



Ptolemaic World Map

With the word "picture" we think first of all of a copy of something. But "world picture" means more than this. We mean by it the world itself, the world as such, what is, in its entirety, just as it is normative and binding for us.... Hence world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world *conceived* and *grasped* as picture.
—Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," 1938

Mappa Mundi (Map of the World), from the Claudius Ptolomaeus *Geographicorum Libri*, 15th c.

AUTOPSY

1 — c. 3300 BC
2 — c. 1000 BC
3 — c. 400 BC
4 — c. 44 BC
5 — 2nd c.

Babylon: Babylonians develop practice of haruspicy, the divination of the future by examination of animal entrails

Egypt: Mummification and postmortem embalming practices standardized and made available to the non-Pharaonic classes

Greece: Hippocrates distinguishes medical science from superstition and the supernatural

Rome: Court physician dissects Caesar and describes his twenty-three wounds

Greece: Galen develops clinical forensics

CONSTRUCTION

1 — c. 3000 BC
2 — c. 2600 BC
3 — 1st c. BC
4 — c. 70
5 — 125

Egypt: Straw first used as binder in the production of mud bricks

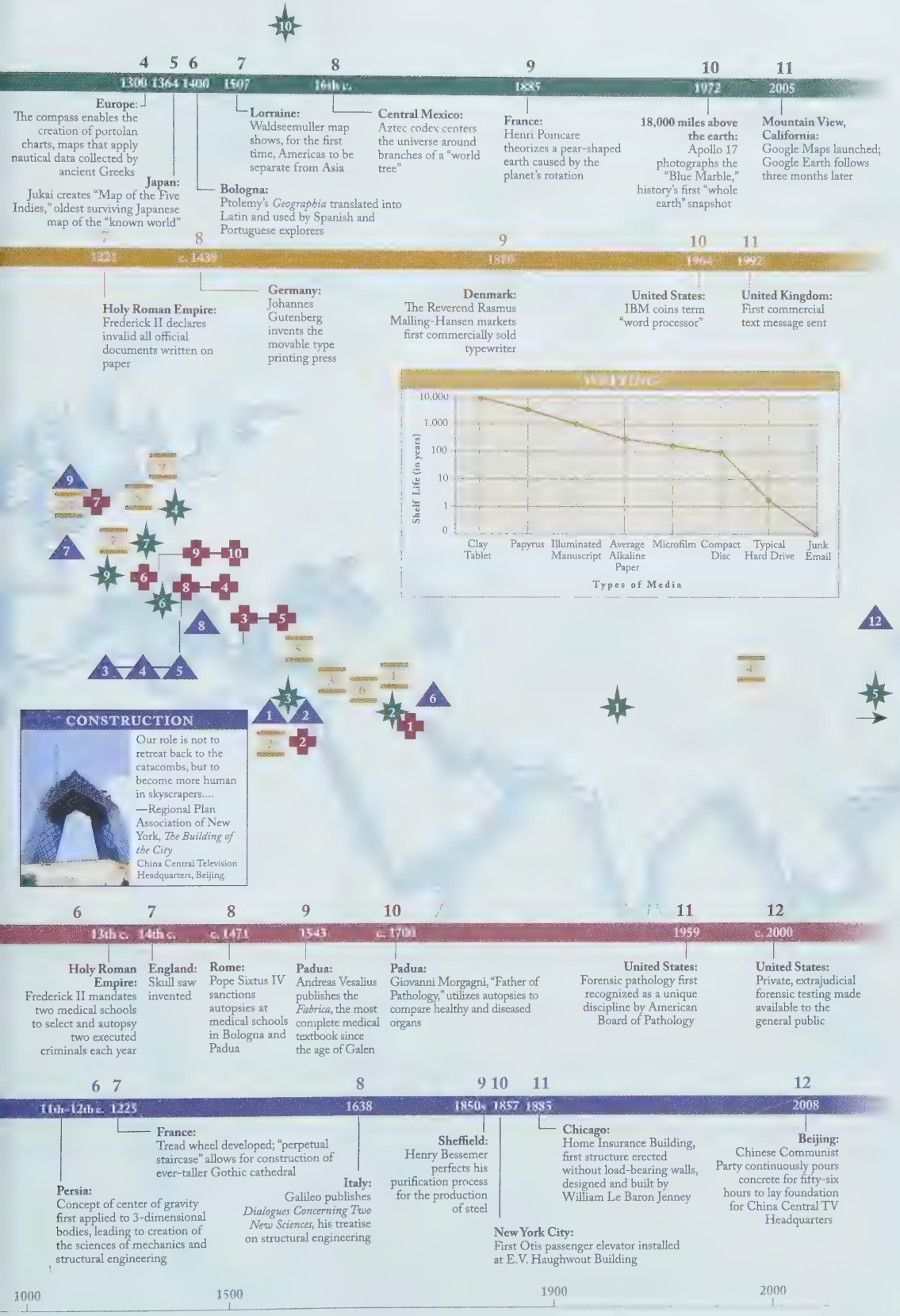
Egypt: Imhotep builds the 196-foot Step Pyramid for Pharaoh Djoser

Rome: Lime-based concrete popularized as man-made material suitable for bearing heavy structural loads

Rome: Colosseum constructed with a capacity of 50,000 spectators; competitions held there for over 500 years

Rome: Construction of the Pantheon combines hitherto separate technologies of concrete and the dome

3500 BC — 1500 BC — 1000 BC — 1


4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
1300 1364 1400 1507 16th c. 1885 1972 2005
Europe: The compass enables the creation of portolan charts, maps that apply nautical data collected by ancient Greeks
Japan: Jukai creates "Map of the Five Indies," oldest surviving Japanese map of the "known world"
Bologna: Ptolemy's Geographia translated into Latin and used by Spanish and Portuguese explorers
Lorraine: Waldseemuller map shows, for the first time, Americas to be separate from Asia
Central Mexico: Aztec codex centers the universe around branches of a "world tree"
France: Henri Poincare theorizes a pear-shaped earth caused by the planet's rotation
18,000 miles above the earth: Apollo 17 photographs the "Blue Marble," history's first "whole earth" snapshot
Mountain View, California: Google Maps launched; Google Earth follows three months later
8 9 10 11
c. 1439 1870 1992
Holy Roman Empire: Frederick II declares invalid all official documents written on paper
Germany: Johannes Gutenberg invents the movable type printing press
Denmark: The Reverend Rasmus Malling-Hansen markets first commercially sold typewriter
United States: IBM coins term "word processor"
United Kingdom: First commercial text message sent
Shelf Life (in years)
10,000
1,000
100
10
1
0
Clay Tablet
Papyrus
Illuminated Manuscript
Average Alkaline Paper
Microfilm
Compact Disc
Typical Hard Drive
Junk Email
Types of Media
CONSTRUCTION
Our role is not to retreat back to the catacombs, but to become more human in skyscrapers....
—Regional Plan Association of New York, The Building of the City
China Central Television Headquarters, Beijing.
6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13th c. 14th c. c. 1471 1545 c. 1701 1959 c. 2000
Holy Roman Empire: Frederick II mandates two medical schools to select and autopsy two executed criminals each year
England: Skull saw invented
Rome: Pope Sixtus IV sanctions autopsies at medical schools in Bologna and Padua
Padua: Andreas Vesalius publishes the Fabrica, the most complete medical textbook since the age of Galen
Padua: Giovanni Morgagni, "Father of Pathology," utilizes autopsies to compare healthy and diseased organs
United States: Forensic pathology first recognized as a unique discipline by American Board of Pathology
United States: Private, extrajudicial forensic testing made available to the general public
6 7 8 9 10 11 12
11th–12th c. 1225 1638 1850s 1857 1885 2008
Persia: Concept of center of gravity first applied to 3-dimensional bodies, leading to creation of the sciences of mechanics and structural engineering
France: Tread wheel developed; "perpetual staircase" allows for construction of ever-taller Gothic cathedral
Italy: Galileo publishes Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences, his treatise on structural engineering
Sheffield: Henry Bessemer perfects his purification process for the production of steel
New York City: First Otis passenger elevator installed at E.V. Haughwout Building
Chicago: Home Insurance Building, first structure erected without load-bearing walls, designed and built by William Le Baron Jenney
Beijing: Chinese Communist Party continuously pours concrete for fifty-six hours to lay foundation for China Central TV Headquarters
1000 1500 1900 2000

Graphics by Joyce Pendola

PLAYING WITH FIRE

by Lewis H. Lapham

The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled.
—Plutarch

To bring up the subject of education in nearly any sector of the American conversation—after dinner or before breakfast, in print and *en blog*, via public television or private smartphone—is to invite an argument or endure a sermon. No subject strikes closer to the bone of the democratic idea, and whether standing at the bar or seated on the lawn, all present come armed with two invincible opinions:

1. *America's best, last, and only hope for the future rests with the promise of education.*
2. *The promise isn't being kept.*

No respondent is ever at a loss for a telling anecdote or an illuminating statistic—forty million functional illiterates in the country unable to read a road sign or a restaurant menu, one fifth of the adults polled unaware that the earth revolves around the sun, 28 percent of the nation's college seniors believing that the American Revolution was won at the Battle of Gettysburg, the Oklahoma high school girl who thought that the Holocaust was a Jewish religious holiday. Witnesses for the prosecution have been bringing evidence of the crimes against the dream of reason for as long as I can remember, certainly since the National Commission on Excellence in Education noticed, in 1983 (*Washington, D.C.,* page 39), that the country's classrooms were flooded with "a rising tide of mediocrity." The waters apparently continue to rise, and it now seems that every six months another committee of alarmed businessmen issues a report complaining of the system's failure to deliver "high-quality product to the infrastructure." The managers of America's money worry about foreign competition in the global markets, say that

Student having classes in a destroyed school, Angola, 1997. Photograph by John Fink.

unless the kids settle down to their lessons, the United States could lose it all—the ball game and the farm, the Nobel Prizes as well as the aircraft carriers, the hedge funds, the Pizza Huts and the roof-garden real estate in Palm and Pebble Beach. Corroborating testimony appears at least once a week in the dispatches from inner-city school districts as well as in the communiqués from the seats of higher learning. In Houston and Detroit administrators of the No Child Left Behind program mention the scarcity of textbooks and the need for armed guards on the playground; professors of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment at Duke and Stanford remark on the loss of respect for Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and a lack of acquaintance with Voltaire, sure signs of cultural backsliding into the mists of Mordor.

Like everybody else in the country old enough to have flunked a math quiz, I can wish that test scores grew on trees; but schools serve the political and economic order in which they operate, and whether they deserve a passing or a failing grade begs the prior question asking what it is they're supposed to teach. The answers change with time and circumstance. The curriculum proposed by Plato (*Athens*, page 121) forbade the reading of poetry apt to "give a distorted image of the nature of the gods and heroes"; Castiglione (*Urbino*, page 159) offered instruction

Chiron and Achilles depicted in a fresco in Herculaneum, Italy, first century.

in "a certain nonchalance" likely to win the favor of a Medici prince or a Borgia duke; John Milton (*London*, page 57) believed "the end of learning" to be the knowledge and love of God. When Yale College in 1701 set itself up as a vessel of the true Puritan faith in the Connecticut wilderness, it undertook to supply the colony's churches with an orthodox ministry, and to bestow upon its graduates the warrants of Christian character and spiritual worth. Thomas Jefferson in 1819 established the University of Virginia (*Charlottesville*, page 28) to develop "the reasoning faculties of our youth," to improve in its nature what "was vicious and perverse" and by so doing to advance "the prosperity, the power, and the happiness of a nation."

Rewards and punishment are the lowest form of education. —*Zhuangzi, c. 286 BC*

The mission statement accorded with the American regard for the intellect as a means of building a better mousetrap—the power of the imagination not to be trusted unless securely fixed to a scientific project or a financial speculation, if in its artistic expression it remains purely decorative: something that can be framed in gold leaf or played on a banjo. John Adams associated the arts with monarchy and superstition and hoped that they wouldn't be encouraged in the new republic. Benjamin Franklin took a similar line. "To America," he said, "one schoolmaster is worth a dozen poets, and the invention of a machine or the improvement of an implement is more important than a masterpiece of Raphael."

By the end of the nineteenth century the nation's power and prosperity was emerging from its oil refineries and its steel mills, and the direction of America's educational affairs passed from the hands of clergymen into those of the pedagogues in charge of the newly minted university bankrolled by the newly ordained ministers of industry and finance, among them John D. Rockefeller, James B. Duke, Ezra Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Andrew W. Mellon, Andrew Carnegie, and Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Addressing a meeting of the New York City High School Teachers Association in 1909, Woodrow Wilson, then president of Princeton University, set forth the requirements of America's newborn industrial civilization. "We want one class of persons to have a liberal education," he said, "and we want another class of persons, a very much larger class of necessity in every society, to forgo the privilege of a liberal education and fit themselves to perform specific manual tasks." John Dewey in 1916 defined democracy as "primarily a mode of associated living," and the schoolmasters of his generation cut the cloth of their teaching to the "needs and opportunities" of the prospective members of the national economic team, prepared to understand that what was great about America was the greatness of its gross domestic product, not the greatness of its love of liberty.

The revised purpose displaced Jefferson's hope of a citizen schooled to the tasks of self-government and encouraged "to judge for himself what would secure or endanger his freedom." Wilson as president of the United States in 1917 deleted the civics lesson with his promulgation of the Espionage Act, which marked as criminal any word or action unaligned with the imperative of "the national defense." In April of that year the United States had entered World War I against the will and better judgment of 98 percent of the American people; for the duration of the war effort the Espionage Act served as the pretext for silencing any disloyal criticism

of government policy. As a comfort and a means of political indoctrination for the American soldiers unclear as to why they were dying in the mud in France, the Wilson Administration's propaganda office drummed up the course now known as "The Great Books," the syllabus intended to transform the recruits bound for the Argonne Forest into what *History Teachers Magazine* called "thinking bayonets."

The framework of American education set up at the outset of the twentieth century has proved itself well-fitted to the specifications of the national security state that at the end of World War II replaced what was once a democratic republic. Since 1965 we have invested upward of $25 trillion in public and private money to extend and adorn the educational infrastructure—splendid football stadiums; handsome libraries; clean and well-lighted scientific laboratories; programs for the gifted, the poor, the foolish, the outnumbered, and the inept—but the purpose of the enterprise remains much the same as it was in the good old days when Dink Stover was a freshman at Yale finding his way in 1910 to the tables down at Mory's (*New Haven*, page 156). Then as now, we hold fast to the ardent but mistaken belief that education is a commodity, the stuff that one pours into empty vessels—skill sets for the large class of persons destined "to perform specific manual tasks," entry-level connections to Mammon for the much smaller class of persons *en route* to first-class accommodation in the society's high-rent districts.

Students don't go to school to acquire the wisdom of Solomon. They go to school to acquire a cash value and improve their lot, to pick up the keys to the kingdom stocked with the treasures to be found in a BMW showroom or an Arizona golf resort. Their education bears comparison to the procedure for changing caterpillars into silkworms just prior to their transformation into adult moths. Silkworms can be turned to a profit; moths blow around in the wind, and add nothing to the wealth of the corporation or the power of the state.

The objective conforms to the popular notion of democracy. As Americans, we make the heroic attempt to educate all our citizens, to provide as many people as possible with as many opportunities as possible, to do for our children what we couldn't do for ourselves. The sentiment is as generous as it is romantic. Appreciated as a monument of idealistic intent, the American school system deserves to be ranked as the eighth wonder of the world. As long ago as 1931, Albert J. Nock, a critic otherwise as sarcastic as H.L. Mencken about the grade level of America's public discourse, was moved to a feeling of awe. He described the country's schools as "an expression... an organization—of a truly noble, selfless and affectionate desire."

Unhappily—cf. the conversations gathered on the lawn or assembled in the bar—the desire is seldom fulfilled. Because the schools serve a political theory as well as an economic objective, they cannot afford to make invidious comparisons between the smart kids and the dumb kids. Under the rules of egalitarian procedure, the schools must teach everything to everybody (algebra and the novels of Jane Austen as well as the manipulation of the iPhone and the condom). Even more wonderful, they must entertain the fiction that everybody can learn to write as well as Jefferson or to think as clearly as René Descartes (*Leiden*, page 107). Although a salve to the democratic conscience, the assumption makes a mockery of the

Un Savant, by Paul Klee, 1933.

facts. Who can imagine an NFL coach fielding his team to conform with social policy, or a major league baseball manager troubling himself with the niceties of affirmative action? College deans and high school principals don't enjoy the same freedom of maneuver, and their obligatory disavowal of what they know to be true condemns the schools to a striving for the lowest plausible denominator.

Children learn by example as well as by precept, and they have only to surf the Internet or consider the careers of Paris Hilton and President George W. Bush to know that the making of a success in this American life doesn't presuppose a prior knowledge of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The society doesn't count on its statesmen or its movie stars to have read John Milton or George Eliot, and the corporations inclined to hire Harvard graduates don't make important distinctions between those familiar with the essays of Michel de Montaigne and those who have mastered the complete works of Danielle Steele. If the kids know how to run the computers, work up the punch lines for Disney or Goldman Sachs, figure the exchange rates between the euro and the yen, what does it matter if they don't know who won either the Revolutionary or the Civil War? It's probably true that a very small percentage of high school students can point to Lithuania on a map; it's

also true that the State Department's ambassadors often can't speak the language of the country to which they buy passage with contributions to a presidential campaign. If a great many college students can't diagram a sentence or write a decent paragraph, the same can be said of most American investment bankers and members of Congress. Should it become necessary to display the finery of learning, the congressman can hire an oil company lobbyist to write the legislation; the banker can order a bespoke set of attitudes from the tailors at the Aspen Institute or the Council on Foreign Relations.

In large states public education will always be mediocre, for the same reason that in large kitchens the cooking is usually bad.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, 1878

The tide of mediocrity flows into the classroom from the ocean that is the society at large, and if many of our public schools resemble penal institutions, the students herded into overcrowded classrooms where they major in the art of boredom and the science of diminished expectations, how better to accustom them to the design specs of a society geared to the blind and insatiable consumption of mediocrity in all its political declensions and commercial conjugations—cf. the Bush Administration's geopolitical theory at work in Iraq, the quality of the nation's airline and fast-food service, corporate executives paid $20 million a year for performing the miracle of an $18 billion write-down. Why would any politician in his or her right mind wish to confront an informed citizenry capable of breaking down the campaign speeches into their subsets of supporting lies? Burden the economy with too many customers able to decipher the hospital bills, or see around the corners of the four-color advertising, and the consequences would be terrible to behold. Not even the Federal Reserve Bank could slow down the domino effect likely to shuffle through the entire inventory of the American dream. If much of what now passes for American education deadens the desire for learning (in both the downmarket public schools and the high-end private universities), so does much of what passes for entertainment in the nation's film and television media. The United States now spends a good part of its fortune on narcotics—for pornography and alcohol as well as for drugs both illicit and prescribed. As a business proposition the war against the American intellect guarantees a more reliable rate of return than the War on Terror.

To conceive of an education as a commodity (as if it were a polo pony or an Armani suit) is to construe the idea of democracy as the freedom of a market instead of a freedom of the mind. I can understand why the mistake is both easy and convenient to make, but unless we stop telling ourselves that America is best understood as the sum of its gross domestic product, we stand little chance of re-imagining our history or reengineering our schools. The businessmen concerned about the quality of the domestic help might as well be talking about the operation of a fried chicken franchise or the manufacture of automobile tires—impose uniform rules and procedures, cut costs, teach the kitchen staff to speak English, upgrade the dress code, simplify the standardized tests, fry the chicken in whale oil instead of recycled bacon grease. In the uplands of the higher learning the custodians of Western civilization speak of moving Aristotle to the night shift and reconfiguring the library as a day care center. The recommendations don't hold much promise of finding a phoenix in the ashes.

Education is a playing with fire, not a taxidermist's stuffing of dead animals, and until we choose to acknowledge the difference between the two pedagogical techniques, we do ourselves no favors. Awaken the student to the light in his or her own mind, and the rest of it doesn't matter—neither the curriculum nor the number of seats in the football stadium, neither the names of the American presidents nor the list of English kings. In college commencement speeches, as with the handing out of prizes for trendsetting journalism, I often hear it said that the truth shall make men free, but I notice that relatively few people know what the phrase means. The truth isn't about the receipt of the diploma or acceptance into law school, not even about the thievery in Washington or the late-breaking scandal in Hollywood. It's synonymous with the courage derived from the habit of not running a con game on the unique and specific temper of one's own mind. What makes men and women free is learning to trust their own thought, possess their own history, speak in their own voices. It doesn't matter how or when the mind achieves the spark of ignition—in an old book or a new video game, from a teacher encountered by accident in graduate or grammar school, in the course of dissecting a frog or pruning an apple tree, while looking at a painting by Jan Vermeer or listening to the Beatles sing "A Hard Day's Night."

Neuroscientists remark on the sensation of joy produced by the chemicals in the brain when the mind is being put to creative and imaginative use, a phenomenon they associate both with the pleasure of sexual orgasm and with the endorphin high experienced by athletes in the zones of effortless performance. The observation supports Plutarch's hypothesis at the head of this essay, stands confirmed by the experiments of Ralph Waldo Emerson (*Cambridge*, page 142): "When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion." Many other voices in this volume of *Lapham's Quarterly* speak of a similar discovery—Frederick Douglass (*Baltimore*, page 77), Mary McCarthy (*Seattle*, page 79), Helen Keller (*Alabama*, page 136)—and if I think I know what they're talking about, I owe my good fortune to Mr. Charles Mulholland's tendency to fool around with matches. In my mind's eye I can still see him as clearly as the paper on which I'm writing this sentence, a heavyset man, red-faced and Irish, given to sudden and excitable gestures, in front of the blackboard in a seventh-grade classroom in San Francisco, drawing the line of Hannibal's elephants through the valleys of Cisalpine Gaul. The chalk squeaks, and the annals of Ancient Rome come as vividly to life as the sound of the ball game in progress under the windows of the Town School. Mr. Mulholland spends a week on the Carthaginian descent into Italy, a month on the Punic Wars, six months on the destruction of the Roman Republic and the contrived divinity of Caesar Augustus. Never once does his voice tire or his enthusiasms fail. He tells the story as if it happened yesterday in Golden Gate Park, stringing together a coherent narrative from different realms of meaning, different kingdoms of fact: a military expedition in Scythia reminds him of something Pliny said about jackals at a dinner party in Pompeii; discussing the logistics of the Egyptian grain trade, he remembers how bitterly Juvenal resented arriviste Egyptian barbers translated into Roman senators; before the hour ends he has improvised a philippic against Cleopatra and her gilded barge. On Monday he compares and contrasts the deaths of Cicero and Seneca; Tuesday he devotes to the menu at Trimalchio's banquet and the conditions of Ovid's exile on the Black

Sea; on Wednesday he draws the moral about how hard it was to tell the truth in imperial Rome and still dine on plover eggs.

What was wonderful was his evident excitement. The feeling was communicable, and after two years in his history class I was hooked on whatever it was that he was smoking. Andrew Delbanco ("The College Idea," page 183) remarks the same response from students at Columbia University in the 1960s lucky enough to hear the art historian Meyer Schapiro expound at length, with "glowing eyes and transported smile," on the life forms in the paintings of Paul Cézanne and Wassily Kandinsky.

The discussions in the newspapers about the sorrows of American education assume the existence of what the editorial writers like to call "the educated citizen." Possibly because I've never met the lady or the gentleman in question, even the idea of such a thing as an educated citizen strikes me as preposterous. I can conceive of a self-educating citizen eligible for induction into Henry David Thoreau's Society for the Diffusion of Useful Ignorance (*Concord*, page 178), and I've had the good fortune to meet a number of people who can be so described. Without exception they possess the valor of their imagination, conceiving of an education neither as a blessed state of being comparable to membership in the Century Club nor as a luxury good tagged at $46,000 per annum in the show windows on Harvard Square. If in sixteen years they've spent fifteen thousand hours in a classroom (roughly the equivalent of twenty months), they expect to spend another fifty or sixty years revising the list of exam questions, knowing, as did T.H. White, that learning "is the only thing that never fails... the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting."

Spoon feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon.
—E.M. Forster, 1951

From time to time in the scholarly journals and the alumni magazines I come across articles that might as well be entitled "What in God's Name Are the Humanities, and Why Are They of Any Use to Us Here in the Bright Blue Technological Wonder of the Twenty-First Century?" The question suggests that within the circles of informed academic opinion the authorities construe the humanities as exquisite ornaments, meant to be preserved, together with the banknotes and the jewels, in the vaults of the university's endowment—an acquaintance with the liberal arts one of those proper appearances that must be kept up, together with the house in Southampton and the season's subscription to the Metropolitan Opera. Apparently content to believe that man's machines have vanquished nature, subjugated the tribes of Paleolithic instinct, and put an end to history, the oracles in residence walk to and fro among the old trees sold to the alumni as naming opportunities, speaking of tenure and tables of organization, of Rembrandt's drawings and Shakespeare's plays as pheasants under glass. Their piety recalls the lines of Archibald MacLeish:

> Freedom that was a thing to use
> They made a thing to save
> And staked it in and fenced it round
> Like a dead man's grave.

To bury the humanities in the tombs of precious marble is to fail the quiz on what constitutes a decent American education. Like the sorcerer's apprentice, our technologists produce continuously improved means toward increasingly ill-defined ends; we have acquired a great many new weapons and information systems, but we don't know at what or at whom to point the digital enhancements. Unless the executive sciences look for advice and consent to the senate of the humanities, we stand a better than even chance of murdering ourselves with our own toys. Not to do so is to make a mistake that is both stupid and ahistorical.

Beyond anything else they could imagine the ancient Greeks admired what Sophocles called the glittering play of "wind-swift thought." Pericles in his funeral oration boasted not of the weapons or the works of art collected in the city, although these were many and beautiful, but of the character of the Athenian citizen—self-reliant, resourceful, public-spirited, marked by "refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy." The term humanist appears in the Italian Renaissance, coined by scholars who rejoiced in both the pride of mind and the pleasures of the flesh. Correctly understood, the humanist ideal connotes ambition tempered with irony, embraces feats of courage as heroic as those to be seen on the playing fields at Ohio State. Humanism is the passion of thought and the will to understand: the voyage of Odysseus, great-hearted and wide-wandering; Charles Darwin sailing for the Galápagos and Fyodor Dostoyevsky in trouble with the police; the Marquis de Condorcet hunted by the agents of the guillotine, at bay in a Paris garret writing his outline of human progress so that he might awaken mankind to the chance of its possible perfection; Mr. Mulholland at the blackboard in San Francisco, up against Hannibal's elephants and Cleopatra's barge, defending the frontiers of the American republic with a badly wounded piece of chalk.

French humanist teaches Charles IX how to read, nineteenth century.

THE HYPOTHESIS

2008: New Haven

WILLIAM DERESIEWICZ TRIMS THE IVY

It didn't dawn on me that there might be a few holes in my education until I was about thirty-five. I'd just bought a house, the pipes needed fixing, and the plumber was standing in my kitchen. There he was—a short, beefy guy with a goatee and a Red Sox cap and a thick Boston accent—and I suddenly learned that I didn't have the slightest idea what to say to someone like him. So alien was his experience to me, so unguessable his values, so mysterious his very language, that I couldn't succeed in engaging him in a few minutes of small talk before he got down to work. Fourteen years of higher education and a handful of Ivy League degrees, and there I was, stiff and stupid, struck dumb by my own dumbness. "Ivy retardation," a friend of mine calls this. I could carry on conversations with people from other countries, in other languages, but I couldn't talk to the man who was standing in my own house.

It's not surprising that it took me so long to discover the extent of my miseducation, because the last thing an elite education will teach you is its own inadequacy. As two dozen years at Yale and Columbia have shown me, elite colleges relentlessly encourage their students to flatter themselves for being there, and for what being there can do for them. The advantages of an elite education are indeed undeniable. You learn to think, at least in certain ways, and you make the contacts needed to launch yourself into a life rich in all of society's most cherished rewards. To consider that while some opportunities are being created, others

Talmudist, by Moretti, twentieth century.

are being canceled and that while some abilities are being developed, others are being crippled, is, within this context, not only outrageous, but inconceivable.

The first disadvantage of an elite education, as I learned in my kitchen that day, is that it makes you incapable of talking to people who aren't like you. Elite schools pride themselves on their diversity, but that diversity is almost entirely a matter of ethnicity and race. With respect to class, these schools are largely—indeed increasingly—homogeneous. Visit any elite campus in our great nation and you can

No mother's mark is more permanent than the mental nevi and moles, and excrescences and mutilations, that students carry with them out of the lecture room.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., 1855

thrill to the heartwarming spectacle of the children of white businesspeople and professionals studying and playing alongside the children of black, Asian, and Latino businesspeople and professionals. At the same time, because these schools tend to cultivate liberal attitudes, they leave their students in the paradoxical position of wanting to advocate on behalf of the working class while being unable to hold a simple conversation with anyone in it. Witness the last two Democratic presidential nominees, Al Gore and John Kerry: one each from Harvard and Yale, both earnest, decent, intelligent men, both utterly incapable of communicating with the larger electorate.

But it isn't just a matter of class. My education taught me to believe that people who didn't go to an Ivy League or equivalent school weren't worth talking to, regardless of their class. I was given the unmistakable message that such people were beneath me. We were "the best and the brightest," as these places love to say, and everyone else was, well, something else: less good, less bright. I learned to give that little nod of understanding, that slightly sympathetic "oh," when people told me they went to a less prestigious college. (If I'd gone to Harvard, I would have learned to say "in Boston" when I was asked where I went to school—the Cambridge version of noblesse oblige.) I never learned that there are smart people who don't go to elite colleges, often precisely for reasons of class. I never learned that there are smart people who don't go to college at all. Elite institutions are supposed to provide a humanistic education, but the first principle of humanism is Terence's: "Nothing human is alien to me." The first disadvantage of an elite education is how very much of the human it alienates you from.

The second disadvantage, implicit in what I've been saying, is that an elite education inculcates a false sense of self-worth. There is nothing wrong with taking pride in one's intellect or knowledge. There is something wrong with the smugness and self-congratulation that elite schools connive at from the moment the fat envelopes come in the mail. From orientation to graduation, the message is implicit in every tone of voice and tilt of the head, every old-school tradition, every article in the student paper, every speech from the dean. The message is: you have arrived. Welcome to the club. And the corollary is equally clear: you deserve everything your presence here is going to enable you to get. When people say that students at elite schools have a strong sense of entitlement, they mean that those students think they deserve more than other people because their SAT scores are higher.

One of the great errors of an elite education, then, is that it teaches you to think that measures of intelligence and academic achievement are measures of value in some moral or metaphysical sense. But they're not. Graduates of elite schools are not more valuable than stupid people, or talentless people, or even lazy people. Their pain does not hurt more. Their souls do not weigh more. If I were religious, I would say, God does not love them more.

The elite like to think of themselves as belonging to a meritocracy, but that's true only up to a point. Getting through the gate

is very difficult, but once you're in, there's almost nothing you can do to get kicked out. Not the most abject academic failure, not the most heinous act of plagiarism, not even threatening a fellow student with bodily harm—I've heard of all three—will get you expelled. The feeling is that, by gosh, it just wouldn't be fair—in other words, the self-protectiveness of the old-boy network, even if it now includes girls. Elite schools nurture excellence, but they also nurture what a former Yale graduate student I know calls "entitled mediocrity." A is the mark of excellence; A– is the mark of entitled mediocrity. It's another one of those metaphors, not so much a grade as a promise. It means, "Don't worry, we'll take care of you. You may not be all that good, but you're good enough."

Here, too, college reflects the way things work in the adult world (unless it's the other way around). For the elite, there's always another extension—a bailout, a pardon, a stint in rehab—always plenty of contacts and special stipends—the country club, the conference, the year-end bonus, the dividend. If Al Gore and John Kerry represent one of the characteristic products of an elite education, George W. Bush represents another. It's no coincidence that our current president, the apotheosis of entitled mediocrity, went to Yale. Entitled mediocrity is indeed the operating principle of his administration, but as Enron and WorldCom and the other scandals of the dot-com meltdown demonstrated, it's also the operating principle of corporate America. The fat salaries paid to underperforming CEOs are an adult version

The oldest known depiction of an anatomy lesson, found in Roman catacombs, fourth century.

of the A–. Anyone who remembers the injured sanctimony with which Kenneth Lay greeted the notion that he should be held accountable for his actions will understand the mentality in question—the belief that once you're in the club, you've got a God-given right to stay in the club. But you don't need to remember Ken Lay, because the whole dynamic played out again last year in the case of Scooter Libby, another Yale man.

Being an intellectual is not the same as being smart. Being an intellectual means more than doing your homework. If so few kids come to college understanding this, it is no wonder. They are products of a system that rarely asked them to think about something bigger than the next assignment. The system forgot to teach them, along the way to the prestige admissions and the lucrative jobs, that the most important achievements can't be measured by a letter or a number or a name. It forgot that the true purpose of education is to make minds, not careers.

Everywhere I go I'm asked if I think the universities stifle writers. My opinion is that they don't stifle enough of them. There's many a bestseller that could have been prevented by a good teacher. —*Flannery O'Connor*

Being an intellectual means, first of all, being passionate about ideas—and not just for the duration of a semester, for the sake of pleasing the teacher, or for getting a good grade. A friend who teaches at the University of Connecticut once complained to me that his students don't think for themselves. Well, I said, Yale students think for themselves, but only because they know we want them to. I've had many wonderful students at Yale and Columbia, bright, thoughtful, creative kids whom it's been a pleasure to talk with and learn from. But most of them have seemed content to color within the lines that their education had marked out for them. Only a small minority have seen their education as part of a larger intellectual journey, have approached the work of the mind with a pilgrim soul. These few have tended to feel like freaks, not least because they get so little support from the university itself. Places like Yale, as one of them put it to me, are not conducive to searchers.

When elite universities boast that they teach their students how to think, they mean that they teach them the analytic and rhetorical skills necessary for success in law or medicine or science or business. But a humanistic education is supposed to mean something more than that, as universities still dimly feel. So when students get to college, they hear a couple of speeches telling them to ask the big questions, and when they graduate, they hear a couple more speeches telling them to ask the big questions. And in between, they spend four years taking courses that train them to ask the little questions—specialized courses, taught by specialized professors, aimed at specialized students. Although the notion of breadth is implicit in the very idea of a liberal arts education, the admissions process increasingly selects for kids who have already begun to think of themselves in specialized terms—the junior journalist, the budding astronomer, the language prodigy. We are slouching, even at elite schools, toward a glorified form of vocational training.

The liberal arts university is becoming the corporate university, its center of gravity shifting to technical fields where scholarly expertise can be parlayed into lucrative business opportunities.

Being an intellectual means thinking your way toward a vision of the good society and then trying to realize that vision by speaking truth to power. It means going into spiritual exile. It means forswearing your allegiance, in lonely freedom, to God, to country, and to Yale. It takes more than just intellect; it takes imagination and courage.

From "The Disadvantages of an Elite Education," published in the Summer 2008 edition of The American Scholar. *The author of* Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets, *Deresiewicz taught English at Yale University from 1998 to 2008.*

Amy, sixteen, scrawls on her arm during a history class in San Jose, California, 1999. Photograph by Lauren Greenfield.

1618: England

WHAT NEED WE MORE OF LEARNING?

Now for learning, what your neede is thereof I know not, but with us, this is all we goe to schoole for: to read common Prayers at Church and set downe common prices at Markets; write a Letter and make a Bond; set downe the day of our Births, our Marriage Day, and make our Wills when we are sicke for the disposing of our goods when we are dead. These are the chiefe matters that we meddle with, and we find enough to trouble our heads withal. For if the fathers knowe their owne children, wives their owne husbands from other men, maydens keep their by-your-leaves from subtle batchelors, Farmers know their cattle by the heads, and Sheepheards know their sheepe by the brand, what more learning have we need of but that experience will teach us without booke? We can learne to plough and harrow, sow and reape, plant and prune, thrash and fanne, winnow and grinde, brue and bake, and all without booke; and these are our chiefe businesses in the Country, except we be Jury men to hang a theefe, or speake truth in a man's right, which conscience & experience will teach us with a little learning. Then what should we study for, except it were to talke with the man in the Moone about the course of the Starres? No, Astronomy is too high a reach for our reason: we will rather sit under a shady tree in the Sunne to take the benefit of the cold ayre, then lye and stare upon the Starres to mark their walke in the heavens, while we loose our wits in the cloudes. And yet we reverence learning as well in the Parson of our parish as our Schoolmaster, but chiefely in our Justices of peace, for under God and the King they beare great sway in the Country. But for great learning in great matters and in great places we leave it to great men. If we live within the compasse of the Law, serve God and obey our King—and as good Subjects ought to doe, in our duties and our prayers dayly remember him—what need we more of learning?

Nicholas Breton, *from* The Court and Country. *Breton was a prolific author popular with his contemporaries for his pastoral and religious poems, and also wrote satires and pithy witticisms: "I wish my deadly foe, no worse / Than want of friends, and empty purse."*

1818: Charlottesville

THOMAS JEFFERSON OPENS A SCHOOL

The objects of this primary education determine its character and limits. These objects would be:

To give to every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business.

To enable him to calculate for himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his contracts, and accounts in writing.

To improve, by reading, his morals and faculties.

To understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either.

To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor, and judgment.

And, in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed.

To instruct the mass of our citizens in their rights, interests, and duties, as men and citizens, being then the objects of education in the primary schools, whether private or public. In them should be taught reading, writing, numerical arithmetic, the elements of mensuration (useful in so many callings), and the outlines of geography and history. And this brings us to the point at which are to commence the higher branches of education, of which the Legislature requires the development; those, for example, which are:

To form the statesmen, legislators, and judges, on whom public prosperity and individual happiness are so much to depend.

To expound the principles and structure of government—the laws which regulate the intercourse of nations, those formed municipally for our own government—and a sound spirit of legislation, which, banishing all arbitrary and unnecessary restraint on individual action, shall leave us free to do whatever does not violate the equal rights of another.

To harmonize and promote the interests of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, and by well-informed views of political economy to give a free scope to the public industry.

To develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order.

To enlighten them with mathematical and physical sciences, which advance the arts,

Ideal Colonialism, illustration from a French scholarly publication, 1933.

and administer to the health, the subsistence, and comforts of human life.

And, generally, to form them to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves.

These are the objects of that higher grade of education, the benefits and blessings of which the Legislature now proposes to provide for the good and ornament of their country: the gratification and happiness of their fellow citizens, of the parent especially, and his progeny on which all his affections are concentrated.

Education generates habits of application, of order, and the love of virtue, and controls, by the force of habit, any innate obliquities in our moral organization. We should be far too from the discouraging persuasion that man is fixed by the law of his nature at a given point—that his improvement is a chimera, and the hope delusive of rendering ourselves wiser, happier, or better than our forefathers were. As well might it be urged that the wild and uncultivated tree, hitherto yielding sour and bitter fruit only, can never be made to yield better; yet we know that the grafting art implants a new tree on the savage stock, producing what is most estimable both in kind and degree. Education, in like manner, engrafts a new man on the native stock, and improves what in his nature was vicious and perverse into qualities of virtue and social worth. And it cannot be but that each generation succeeding to the knowledge acquired by all those who preceded it, adding to it their own acquisitions and discoveries, and handing the mass down for successive and constant accumulation, must advance the knowledge and well-being of mankind: not *infinitely*, as some have said, but *indefinitely*, and to a term which no one can fix and foresee. Indeed, we need look back half a century, to times which many now living remember well, and see the wonderful advances in the sciences and arts which have been made within that period. Some of these have rendered the elements themselves subservient to the purposes of man, have harnessed them to the yoke of his labors, and effected the great blessings of moderating his own: of accomplishing what was beyond his feeble force, and extending the comforts of life to a much enlarged circle, to those who had before known its necessaries only. These are not the vain dreams of sanguine hope: we have before our eyes real and living examples. What but education has advanced us beyond the condition of our indigenous neighbors? And what chains them to their present state of barbarism and wretchedness, but a bigoted veneration for the supposed superlative wisdom of their fathers, and the preposterous idea that they are to look backward for better things, and not forward—longing, as it should seem, to return to the days of eating acorns and roots rather than indulge in the degeneracies of civilization? And how much more encouraging to the achievements of science and improvement is this than the desponding view that the condition of man cannot be ameliorated, that what has been must ever be, and that to secure ourselves where we are we must tread with awful reverence in the footsteps of our fathers. This doctrine is the genuine fruit of the alliance between church and state, the tenants of which, finding themselves but too well in their present condition, oppose all advances which might unmask their usurpations, and monopolies of honors, wealth, and power, and fear every change as endangering the comforts they now hold. Nor must we omit to mention among the benefits of education the incalculable advantage of training up able counselors to administer the affairs of our country in all its departments—legislative, executive, and judiciary—and to bear their proper share in the councils of our national government—nothing more than education advancing the prosperity, the power, and the happiness of a nation.

From Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia. *As the university's founder and developer of its curriculum, Jefferson envisioned the campus as an "academical village" and designed all of its neoclassical buildings. The university opened with eight professors in 1825; by the Civil War's outbreak, it was second only to Harvard University in the size of its student body and faculty.*

c. 1130: France

PETER ABÉLARD RENOUNCES PRIDE AND LECHERY

At last I came to Paris, where dialectic had long been particularly flourishing, and joined William of Champeaux, who at the time was the supreme master of the subject, both in reputation and in fact. I stayed in his school for a time, but though he welcomed me at first he soon took a violent dislike to me because I set out to refute some of his arguments and frequently reasoned against him. On several occasions I proved myself his superior in debate. Those who were considered the leaders among my fellow students were also annoyed, and the more so as they looked on me as the youngest and most recent pupil. This was the beginning of the misfortunes which have dogged me to this day, and as my reputation grew, so other men's jealousy was aroused.

The Romans would never have found time to conquer the world if they had been obliged first to learn Latin.

—Heinrich Heine, 1827

It ended by my setting my heart on founding a school of my own, young as I was and estimating my capacities too highly for my years; and I had my eye on a site suited to my purpose—Melun, an important town at that time and a royal residence. My master suspected my intentions, and in an attempt to remove my school as far as possible from his own, before I could leave him he secretly used every means he could to thwart my plans and keep me from the place I had chosen. But among the powers in the land he had several enemies, and these men helped me to obtain my desire. I also won considerable support simply through his unconcealed jealousy. Thus my school had its start and my reputation for dialectic began to spread, with the result that the fame of my old fellow students and even that of the master himself gradually declined and came to an end. Consequently my self-confidence rose still higher, and I made haste to transfer my school to Corbeil, a town nearer Paris, where I could embarrass him through more frequent encounters in disputation.

However, I was not there long before I fell ill through overwork and was obliged to return home. For some years, being remote from France, I was sought out more ardently by those eager for instruction in dialectic. A few years later, when I had long since recovered my health, my teacher William, archdeacon of Paris, changed his former status and joined the order of the Canons Regular with the intention, it was said, of gaining promotion to a higher prelacy through a reputation for increased piety. He was soon successful when he was made bishop of Châlons. But this change in his way of life did not oblige him either to leave Paris or to give up his study of philosophy, and he soon resumed his public teaching in his usual manner in the very monastery to which he had retired to follow the religious life. I returned to him to hear his lectures on rhetoric, and in the course of our philosophical disputes I produced a sequence of clear logical arguments to make him amend, or rather abandon, his previous attitude to universals. Consequently, when William had modified or rather been forced to give up his original position, his lectures fell into such contempt that he was scarcely accepted on any other points of dialectic, as if the whole subject rested solely on the question of universals.

My own teaching gained so much prestige and authority from this that the strongest supporters of my master who had hitherto been the most violent among my attackers now flocked to join my school. Even William's successor as head of the Paris school offered me his chair so that he could join the others as my pupil, in the place where his master and mine had won fame. Within a few days of my taking over the teaching of dialectic, William was eaten up with jealousy and consumed with anger to an extent it is difficult to convey, and, being unable to control the violence of his resentment for

long, he made another artful attempt to banish me. I had done nothing to justify his acting openly against me, so he launched an infamous attack on the man who had put me in his chair in order to remove the school from him and put it in the hands of one of my rivals. I then returned to Melun and set up my school there as before; and the more his jealousy pursued me, the more widely my reputation spread, for as the poet says, "Envy seeks the heights, the winds sweep the summits."

Meanwhile my dearest mother Lucie begged me to return home, for after my father Berengar's entry into monastic life she was preparing to do the same. When she had done so I returned to France, with the special purpose of studying divinity, to find my master William (whom I have often mentioned) already installed as bishop of Châlons. However, in this field his own master, Anselm of Laon, was then the greatest authority because of his great age.

I therefore approached this old man, who owed his reputation more to long practice than to intelligence or memory. Anyone who knocked at his door to seek an answer to some question went away more uncertain than he came. Anselm could win the admiration of an audience, but he was useless when put to the question. He had a remarkable command of words but their meaning was worthless and devoid of all sense. The fire he kindled filled his house with smoke but did not light it up; he was a tree in full leaf which could be seen from afar, but on closer and more careful inspection proved to be barren. I had come to this tree to gather fruit, but I found it was the fig

The Astronomer (detail), by Jan Vermeer, 1668.

tree which the Lord cursed, or the ancient oak to which Lucan compares Pompey:

> There stands the shadow of a noble name,
> Like a tall oak in a field of corn.

Once I discovered this I did not lie idle in his shade for long. My attendance at his lectures gradually became more and more irregular, to the annoyance of some of his leading pupils, who took it as a sign of contempt for

In England education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes and would probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.

—Oscar Wilde, 1895

so great a master. They began secretly to turn him against me, until their base insinuations succeeded in rousing his jealousy. One day it happened that after a session of sentences we students were joking among ourselves, when someone rounded on me and asked what I thought of the reading of the Holy Scriptures, when I had hitherto studied only philosophy. I replied that concentration on such reading was most beneficial for the salvation of the soul, but that I found it most surprising that for educated men the writings or glosses of the Fathers themselves were not sufficient for interpreting their commentaries without further instruction. There was general laughter and I was asked by many of those present if I could or would venture to tackle this myself. I said I was ready to try if they wished. Still laughing, they shouted, "Right, that's settled! Take some commentary on a little-known text and we'll test what you say." Then they all agreed on an extremely obscure prophecy of Ezekiel. I took the commentary and promptly invited them all to hear my interpretation the very next day. They then pressed unwanted advice on me, telling me not to hurry over something so important but to remember my inexperience and give longer thought to working out and confirming my exposition. I replied indignantly that it was not my custom to benefit by practice, but I relied on my own intelligence, and either they must come to my lecture at the time of my choosing or I should abandon it altogether.

At my first lecture there were certainly not many people present, for everyone thought it absurd that I could attempt this so soon when up to now I had made no study at all of the Scriptures. But all those who came approved, so that they commended the lecture warmly and urged me to comment on the text on the same lines as my lecture. The news brought people who had missed my first lecture flocking to the second and third ones, all alike most eager to make copies of the glosses which I had begun with on the first day.

Anselm was now wildly jealous, and being already set against me by the suggestions of some of his pupils, as I said before, he began to attack me for lecturing on the Scriptures in the same way as my master William had done previously over philosophy. There were at this time two outstanding students in the old man's school, Alberic of Rheims and Lotulf of Lombardy, whose hostility to me was intensified by the good opinion they had of themselves. It was largely through their insinuations, as was afterward proved, that Anselm lost his head and curtly forbade me to continue my work of interpretation in the place where he taught, on the pretext that any mistake which I might write down through lack of training in the subject would be attributed to him. When this reached the ears of the students, their indignation knew no bounds—this was an act of sheer spite and calumny, such as had never been directed at anyone before; but the more open it was, the more it brought me renown, and through persecution my fame increased.

A few days after this I returned to Paris, to the school which had long ago been intended for and offered to me, and from which I had been expelled at the start. I remained in possession there in peace for several years, and as soon as I began my course of teaching I set myself to complete the commentaries on Ezekiel which I had started at Laon. These proved so popular with their readers that they judged my

reputation to stand as high for my interpretation of the Scriptures as it had previously done for philosophy. The numbers in the school increased enormously as the students gathered there eager for instruction in both subjects, and the wealth and fame this brought me must be well known to you.

But success always puffs up fools with pride, and worldly security weakens the spirit's resolution and easily destroys it through carnal temptations. I began to think myself the only philosopher in the world, with nothing to fear from anyone, and so I yielded to the lusts of the flesh. Hitherto I had been entirely continent, but now the further I advanced in philosophy and theology, the further I fell behind the philosophers and holy Fathers in the impurity of my life. It is well known that the philosophers, and still more the Fathers—by which is meant those who have devoted themselves to the teachings of Holy Scripture—were especially glorified by their chastity. Since therefore I was wholly enslaved to pride and lechery, God's grace provided a remedy for both these evils, though not one of my choosing: first for my lechery by depriving me of those organs with which I had practiced it, and then for the pride which had grown in me through my learning—for in the words of the Apostle, "Knowledge breeds conceit"—when I was humiliated by the burning of the book of which I was so proud.

From Historia Calamitatum. *After enraging Anselm of Laon and suffering the penalty of castration for his romance with his pupil Héloïse, Abélard at the age of forty withdrew to an abbey at Saint-Denis, where he wrote his* Theologia, *deemed heretical and burned in 1121 by a council at Soissons.*

Teacher and pupil, twentieth century.

1987: Chicago

EAST MEETS WEST

One of the techniques of opening young people up is to require a college course in a non-Western culture. Although many of the persons teaching such courses are real scholars and lovers of the areas they study, in every case I have seen this requirement—when there are so many other things that can and should be learned but are not required, when philosophy and religion are no longer required—has a demagogic intention. The point is to force students to recognize that there are other ways of thinking and that Western ways are not better. It is again not the content that counts but the lesson to be drawn. Such requirements are part of the effort to establish a world community and train its member—the person devoid of prejudice. But if the students were really to learn something of the minds of any of these non-Western cultures—which they do not—they would find that each and every one of these cultures is ethnocentric. All of them think their way is the best way and all others are inferior. Herodotus tells us that the Persians thought that they were the best, that those nations bordering on them were next best, that those nations bordering on the nations bordering on them were third best, and so on, their worth declining as the concentric circles were farther from the Persian center. This is the very definition of ethnocentrism. Something like this is as ubiquitous as the prohibition against incest between mother and son.

Only in the Western nations—i.e., those influenced by Greek philosophy—is there some willingness to doubt the identification of the good with one's own way. One should conclude from the study of non-Western cultures that not only to prefer one's own way but to believe it best, superior to all others, is primary and even natural—exactly the opposite of what is intended by requiring students to study these cultures. What we are really doing is applying a Western prejudice—which we covertly take to indicate the superiority of our culture—and deforming the evidence of those other cultures to attest to its validity. The scientific study of other cultures is almost exclusively a Western phenomenon, and in its origin was obviously connected with the search for new and better ways, or at least for validation of the hope that our own culture really is the better way—a validation for which there is no felt need in other cultures. If we are to learn from those cultures, we must wonder whether such scientific study is a good idea. Consistency would seem to require professors of openness to respect the ethnocentrism or closedness they find everywhere else. However, in attacking ethnocentrism, what they actually do is to assert unawares the supe-

1375: Algeria

EDUCATION BY WHIP

Severe punishment in the course of instruction does harm to the student, especially to little children, because it belongs among the things that make for a bad habit. Students, slaves, and servants who are brought up with injustice and tyrannical force are overcome by it. It makes them feel oppressed and causes them to lose their energy. It makes them lazy and induces them to lie and be insincere. Their outward behavior differs from what they are thinking because they are afraid that they will have to suffer tyrannical treatment if they tell the truth. Thus they are taught deceit and trickery. This becomes their custom and character. They lose the quality that goes with social and political organization and makes people human—namely the desire to protect and defend themselves and their homes—and they become dependent on others. Indeed, their souls become too indolent to attempt to acquire virtues and good character qualities. Thus they fall short of their potentialities and do not reach the limit of their humanity. As a result, they revert to the stage of the lowest of the low.

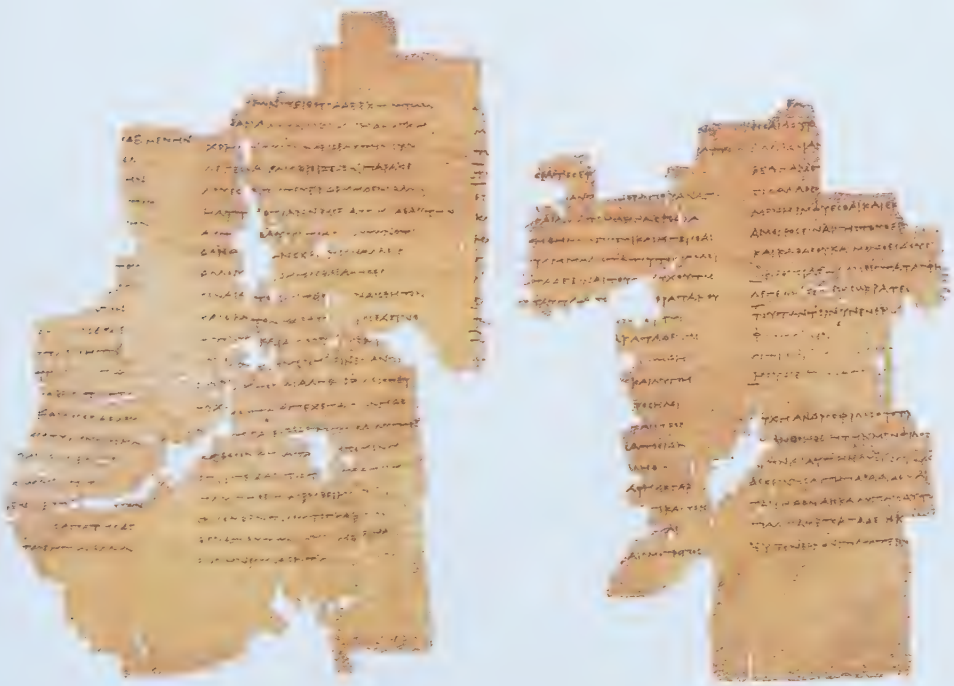
Ibn Khaldun, *from the* Muqaddimah. *Descended from a family of powerful Arab politicians who helped to govern Spain for four centuries, Khaldun memorized the Qur'an before his appointment to the court of Tunis at the age of twenty. Khaldun later retreated to an Algerian castle to write what Arnold Toynbee called "a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind."*

riority of their scientific understanding and the inferiority of the other cultures which do not recognize it at the same time that they reject all such claims to superiority. They both affirm and deny the goodness of their science. They face a problem akin to that faced by Pascal in the conflict between reason and revelation, without the intellectual intransigence that forced him to abandon science in favor of faith.

The reason for the non-Western closedness, or ethnocentrism, is clear. Men must love and be loyal to their families and their peoples in order to preserve them. Only if they think their own things are good can they rest content with them. A father must prefer his child to other children, a citizen his country to others. That is why there are myths—to justify these attachments. And a man needs a place and opinions by which to orient himself. This is strongly asserted by those who talk about the importance of roots. The problem of getting along with outsiders is secondary to, and sometimes in conflict with, having an inside, a people, a culture, a way of life. A very great narrowness is not incompatible with the health of an individual or a people, whereas with great openness it is hard to avoid decomposition. The firm binding of the good with one's own, the refusal to see a distinction between the two, a vision of the cosmos that has a special place for one's people, seem to be conditions of culture. This is what really follows from the study of non-Western cultures proposed for undergraduates. It points them back to passionate attachment to their own and away from the science which liberates them from it. Science now appears as a threat to culture and a dangerous, uprooting charm. In short, they are lost in a no man's land between the goodness of knowing and the goodness of culture, where they have been placed by their teachers who no longer have the resources to guide them. Help must be sought elsewhere.

Allan Bloom, *from* The Closing of the American Mind. *Bloom acquired his faith in the redemptive powers of classical literature while studying under Leo Strauss at the University of Chicago in the 1950s. His best-selling book, once called "the first shot of the culture wars," was praised as "an unparalleled reflection" by the* New York Times.

Plato's *Phaedo*, fragments of the oldest substantially extant classical manuscript, third century BC.



1854: Dublin

EMPIRE OF REASON

What an empire is in political history, such is a university in the sphere of philosophy and research. It is, as I have said, the high protecting power of all knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery, of experiment and speculation; it maps out the territory of the intellect, and sees that the boundaries of each province are religiously respected, and that there is neither encroachment nor surrender on any side. It acts as umpire between truth and truth, and, taking into account the nature and importance of each, assigns to all their due order of precedence. It maintains no one department of thought exclusively, however ample and noble, and it sacrifices none. It is deferential and loyal, according to their respective weight, to the claims of literature, of physical research, of history, of metaphysics, of theological science. It is impartial toward them all, and promotes each in its own place and for its own object. It is ancillary certainly, and of necessity, to the Catholic Church; but in the same way that one of the queen's judges is an officer of the queen's, and nevertheless determines certain legal proceedings between the queen and her subjects. It is ministrative to the Catholic Church, first because truth of any kind can but minister to truth; next, still more, because nature ever will pay homage to grace, and reason cannot but illustrate and defend revelation; and thirdly, because the Church has a sovereign authority, and when she speaks ex cathedra, must be obeyed. But this is the remote end of a university; its immediate end is to secure the due disposition, according to one sovereign order and the cultivation in that order, of all the provinces and methods of thought which the human intellect has created.

In this point of view, its several professors are like the ministers of various political powers at one court or conference. They represent their respective sciences and attend to the private interests of those sciences respectively; and, should dispute arise between those sciences, they are the persons to talk over and arrange it, without risk of extravagant pretensions on any side, of angry collision, or of popular commotion. A liberal philosophy becomes the habit of minds thus exercised; a breadth and spaciousness of thought in which lines, seemingly parallel, may converge at leisure, and principles, recognized as incommensurable, may be safely antagonistic.

Cardinal John Henry Newman, *from* The Idea of a University. *Newman based his schematic for the modern university on a mixture of reason and faith. Pope Leo XIII ordained him cardinal deacon of the church of St. George in Velabro in 1879.*

A philosophy school at Constantinople, from an illustrated history of the Byzantine Empire, twelfth century.

1975: Paris

POWER PLAY

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance. It is yet another innovation of the classical age that the historians of science have left unexplored. People write the history of experiments on those born blind, on wolf children, or those under hypnosis. But who will write the more general, more fluid, but also more determinant history of the "examination"—its rituals, its methods, its characters and their roles, its play of questions and answers, its systems of marking and classification? For in this slender technique is to be found a whole domain of knowledge, a whole type of power. One often speaks of the ideology that the human "sciences" bring with them, in either a discreet or prolix manner. But does their very technology, this tiny operational schema that has become so widespread, this familiar method of the examination, implement within a single mechanism power relations that make it possible to extract and constitute knowledge? It is not simply at the level of consciousness, of representations and in what one thinks one knows, but at the level of what makes possible the knowledge that is transformed into a political investment.

In the late eighteenth century, the school became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching. It became less and less a question of jousts in which pupils pitched their forces against one another and increasingly a perpetual comparison of each and all that made it possible both to measure and to judge. The Brothers of the Christian Schools wanted their pupils to be examined every day of the week: on the first for spelling, on the second for arithmetic, on the third for catechism in the morning and for handwriting in the afternoon, etc. Moreover, there was to be an examination each month in order to pick out those who deserved to be submitted for examination by the inspector. From 1775, there existed at the École des Ponts et Chaussées sixteen examinations a year: three in mathematics, three in architecture, three in drawing, two in writing, one in stone cutting, one in style, one in surveying, one in leveling, one in quantity surveying. The examination did not simply mark the end of an apprenticeship, it was one of its permanent factors; it was woven into it through a constantly repeated ritual of power. The examination enabled the teacher, while transmitting his knowledge, to transform his pupils into a whole field of knowledge. Whereas the examination with which an apprenticeship ended in the guild tradition validated an acquired aptitude—the "masterwork" authenticated a transmission of knowledge that had already been accomplished—the examination in the school was a constant exchanger of knowledge; it guaranteed the movement of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil, but it extracted from the pupil a knowledge destined and reserved for the teacher. The school became the place of elaboration for pedagogy.

Michel Foucault, *from* Discipline and Punish. *The father of cultural history and a leading French intellectual in the latter half of the twentieth century, Foucault employed his brand of intellectual genealogy to trace the lineages of the human sciences and sexuality in his seminal books* The Order of Things *and* The History of Sexuality.

1807: Berlin

ASSEMBLY LINE

The very recognition of, and reliance upon, free will in the pupil is the first mistake of the old system and the clear confession of its impotence and futility. For, by confessing that after all its most powerful efforts the will still remains free—that is, hesitating undecided between good and evil—it confesses that it neither is able, nor wishes, nor longs to fashion the will and since the latter is the very root of man, man himself—it considers this altogether impossible. The new education must consist essentially in this: that it completely destroys freedom of will in the soil which it undertakes to cultivate and produces on the contrary strict necessity in the decisions of the will, the opposite being impossible. Such a will can henceforth be relied on with confidence and certainty.

Famous Dropouts

- F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Frank Lloyd Wright
- Jack London
- Cher
- Ansel Adams
- Humphrey Bogart
- Louis Armstrong
- Benjamin Franklin
- Bill Gates
- Steve Jobs
- Thomas Edison

All education aims at producing a stable, settled, and steadfast character, which no longer is developing but is, and cannot be other than it is. If it did not aim at such a character it would be, not education, but some aimless game; if it did not produce such a character it would still be incomplete. He who must still exhort himself, and be exhorted, to will the good has as yet no firm and ever-ready will, but wills a will anew every time he needs it. But he who has such a stable will, wills what he wills forever and cannot under any circumstances will otherwise than he always wills. For him freedom of the will is destroyed and swallowed up in necessity. The past age had neither a true conception of education for manhood nor the power to realize that conception. It showed this by wanting to improve mankind by warning sermons, and by being angry and scolding when these sermons were of no avail. Yet how could they avail aught? Before the warning, and independent of it, the will of man has already its definite bent. If this agrees with your exhortation, the latter comes too late; without it he would have done what you exhort him to. If this bent and your exhortation are in opposition, you may at most bewilder him for a few moments; when the time comes, he forgets himself and your exhortation, and follows his natural inclination. If you want to influence him at all, you must do more than merely talk to him; you must fashion him, and fashion him in such a way that he simply cannot will otherwise than you wish him to will. It is idle to say, "Fly,"—for he has no wings, and for all your exhortations will never rise two steps above the ground. But develop, if you can, his spiritual wings; let him exercise them and make them strong, and without any exhortation from you he will want, and will be able, to do nothing but fly.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *from* Addresses to the German Nation. *A leading intellectual of his day, Fichte was one of the founders of German idealism. His first publication,* An Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation, *was printed in 1792 absent his name, and it was judged to be the work of Immanuel Kant. When the elder philosopher corrected the error, Fichte's reputation was made.*

1983: Washington, D.C.

RISING TIDE OF MEDIOCRITY

Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments.

If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the *Sputnik* challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have in effect been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.

History is not kind to idlers. The time is long past when Americans' destiny was assured simply by an abundance of natural resources and inexhaustible human enthusiasm, and by our relative isolation from the malignant problems of older civilizations. The world is indeed one global village. We live among determined, well-educated, and strongly motivated competitors. We compete with them for international standing and markets, not only with products but also with the ideas of our laboratories and neighborhood workshops. America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer.

The risk is not only that the Japanese make automobiles more efficiently than Americans and have government subsidies for development and export. It is not just that the South Koreans recently built the world's most efficient steel mill, or that American machine tools, once the pride of the world, are being displaced by German products. It is also that these developments signify a redistribution of trained capability throughout the globe. Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all—old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering.

> *Education is a companion which no misfortune can depress, no crime can destroy, no enemy can alienate, no despotism can enslave. At home a friend, abroad an introduction, in solitude a solace, and in society an ornament. It chastens vice, it guides virtue, it gives at once grace and government to genius. Without it, what is man? A splendid slave, a reasoning savage.*
>
> *—Joseph Addison, 1711*

From A Nation at Risk. *The report commissioned during the first term of Ronald Reagan's presidency recommended that states lengthen the school year and set more rigid high school course requirements. On the report's twenty-fifth anniversary, the nonpartisan campaign Strong American Schools observed that "stunningly few of the Commission's recommendations actually have been enacted."*

1936: The Netherlands

INNATE ABILITIES

We can readily know what young animals will be like when they mature. A gazelle will be light and swift of foot; an elephant will be awkward and heavy in its gait; a tiger will be fierce, and a rabbit will be a timid vegetarian.

But a man is capable of becoming anything, and his apparent helplessness as a child is the seedbed of his distinctive personality. The now inarticulate voice will one day speak, though in what language is yet unknown. This he will learn by paying attention to those about him, imitating the sounds he hears—first syllables and then words—to the best of his ability. Making use of his own will in his contact with his environment, he develops his various faculties and thus becomes in a sense his own creator.

Philosophers have always been intrigued with the state of a child so helpless after birth, but up to the present teachers and physicians have been too little concerned with it. Like many other things that lie hidden in the subconscious, the child's state has been considered simply as a fact without any particular significance.

In actual practice, however, such an attitude has endangered the psychic life of the child. It has led to the belief that not only are a child's muscles inactive but that the child himself is helpless, inactive, and without a psychic life of his own. Adults have consequently, though erroneously, believed that it is through their care and assistance that a child is so wonderful animated. They have looked upon such assistance as a personal responsibility and have imagined that they were the molders of the child and the builders of his psychic life.

In so doing, adults claim for themselves an almost divine power, making themselves gods to their children, and applying to themselves the words of Genesis: "I will make man in my image." Pride was man's first sin; his attempts to replace God have been the cause of the misery of all his descendants.

But if a child has within himself the key to his own personality, if he has a plan of development and laws to be observed, these must be delicate powers indeed, and an adult by his untimely interventions can prevent their secret realization. From time immemorial men, through their interference with these natural laws, have hindered the divine plan for children and, as a consequence, God's plan for men themselves.

One of the great problems facing men is their failure to realize the fact that a child possesses an active psychic life even when he cannot manifest it, and that the child must secretly perfect this inner life over a long period of time.

The child is like a soul in a dark dungeon striving to come out into the light, to be born, to grow, which slowly but surely animates the sluggish flesh, calling to it with the voice of its will. And, all the while, there is standing by a gigantic being of enormous power waiting to pounce upon it and crush it.

The child becoming incarnate is a spiritual embryo which needs its own special environment. Just as a physical embryo needs its mother's womb in which to grow, so the spiritual embryo needs to be protected by an external environment that is warm with love and rich in nourishment, where everything is disposed to welcome, and nothing to harm it.

When this is finally realized, adults will change their attitude toward children, for the image of a child as a spiritual being becoming incarnate not only stirs us but imposes upon us new responsibilities. As we look upon the charming little body, so much like a toy and upon which we lavish so much physical attention, we begin to appreciate the saying of the Roman poet Juvenal: "The greatest reverence is owed to a child."

Maria Montessori, *from* The Secret of Childhood. *Montessori was the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome's medical school in 1896, and she developed her interest in education while working with mentally disabled children. Running a preschool in 1907 in a slum of Rome, Montessori was soon propelled by the success of her unconventional methods to tour the world for the next forty years lecturing on the child's natural capabilities.*

1884: Indiana

ZITKALA-SA ATTENDS BOARDING SCHOOL

It was night when we reached the school grounds. The lights from the windows of the large buildings fell upon some of the icicled trees that stood beneath them. We were led toward an open door, where the brightness of the lights within flooded out over the heads of the excited palefaces who blocked the way. My body trembled more from fear than from the snow I trod upon.

Entering the house, I stood close against the wall. The strong glaring light in the large whitewashed room dazzled my eyes. The noisy hurrying of hard shoes upon a bare wooden floor increased the whirring in my ears. My only safety seemed to be in keeping next to the wall. As I was wondering in which direction to escape from all this confusion, two warm hands grasped me firmly, and in the same moment I was tossed high in midair. A rosy-cheeked paleface woman caught me in her arms. I was both frightened and insulted by such trifling. I stared into her eyes, wishing her to let me stand on my own feet, but she jumped me up and down with increasing enthusiasm. My mother had never made a plaything of her wee daughter. Remembering this I began to cry aloud.

They misunderstood the cause of my tears and placed me at a white table loaded with food. There our party were united again. As I did not hush my crying, one of the older ones whispered to me, "Wait until you are alone in the night."

It was very little I could swallow besides my sobs, that evening.

"Oh, I want my mother and my brother Dawee! I want to go to my aunt!" I pleaded, but the ears of the palefaces could not hear me.

From the table we were taken along an upward incline of wooden boxes, which I learned afterward to call a stairway. At the top was a quiet hall, dimly lighted. Many narrow beds were in one straight line down the entire length of the wall. In them lay sleeping brown faces, which peeped just out of the coverings. I was tucked into bed with one of the tall girls because she talked to me in my mother tongue and seemed to soothe me.

I had arrived in the wonderful land of rosy skies but I was not happy as I had thought I

Saint Jerome Writing, by Michelangelo Caravaggio, 1606.

should be. My long travel and the bewildering sights had exhausted me. I fell asleep, heaving deep, tired sobs. My tears were left to dry themselves in streaks, because neither my aunt nor my mother was near to wipe them away.

The first day in the land of apples was a bitter-cold one; for the snow still covered the ground and the trees were bare. A large bell rang for breakfast, its loud metallic voice crashing through the belfry overhead and into our sensitive ears. The annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors gave us no peace. The constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless.

A paleface woman with white hair came up after us. We were placed in a line of girls who were marching into the dining room. These were Indian girls, in stiff shoes and closely clinging dresses. The small girls wore sleeved aprons and shingled hair. As I walked noiselessly in my soft moccasins, I felt like sinking to the floor, for my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders. I looked hard at the Indian girls, who seemed not to care that they were even more immodestly dressed than I in their tightly fitting clothes. While we marched in, the boys entered at an opposite door. I watched for the three young braves who came in our party. I spied them in the rear ranks looking as uncomfortable as I felt.

A small bell was tapped and each of the pupils drew a chair from under the table. Supposing this act meant they were to be seated, I pulled out mine and at once slipped into it from one side. But when I turned my head I saw that I was the only one seated and all the rest at our table remained standing. Just as I began to rise, looking shyly around to see how chairs were to be used, a second bell was sounded. All were seated at last and I had to crawl back into my chair again. I heard a man's voice at one end of the hall and I looked around to see him. But all the others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a paleface woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman. The man ceased his mutterings, and then a third bell was tapped. Everyone picked up his knife and fork and began eating. I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more.

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judéwin gave me a terrible warning. Judéwin knew a few words of English, and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners and shingled hair by cowards!

1776: Boston

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

If you complain of neglect of education in sons, what shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it? With regard to the education of my own children, I find myself soon out of my depth, and destitute and deficient in every part of education.

I most sincerely wish that some more liberal plan might be laid and executed for the benefit of the rising generation, and that our new constitution may be distinguished for learning and virtue. If we mean to have heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, we should have learned women. The world perhaps would laugh at me, and accuse me of vanity, but you I know have a mind too enlarged and liberal to disregard the sentiment. If much depends as is allowed upon the early education of youth, and the first principles which are instilled take the deepest root, great benefit must arise from literary accomplishments in women.

Abigail Adams, *from a letter to her husband. Writing on the eve of American independence, the wife of John Adams remained a strong advocate for women's education in the new republic. She also championed the abolition of slavery.*

We discussed our fate some moments and when Judéwin said, "We have to submit, because they are strong," I rebelled.

"No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!" I answered.

I watched my chance, and when no one noticed I disappeared. I crept up the stairs as quietly as I could in my squeaking shoes—my moccasins had been exchanged for shoes. Along the hall I passed without knowing whither I was going. Turning aside to an open door, I found a large room with three white beds in it. The windows were covered with dark green curtains, which made the room very dim. Thankful that no one was there, I directed my steps toward the corner farthest from the door. On my hands and knees I crawled under the bed and cuddled myself in the dark corner.

From my hiding place I peered out, shuddering with fear whenever I heard footsteps nearby. Though in the hall loud voices were calling my name and I knew that even Judéwin was searching for me, I did not open my mouth to answer. Then the steps were quickened and the voices became excited. The sounds came nearer and nearer. Women and girls entered the room. I held my breath, and watched them open closet doors and peep behind large trunks. Someone threw up the curtains and the room was filled with sudden light. What caused them to stoop and look under the bed I do not know. I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair.

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.

From "The School Days of an Indian Girl," published in The Atlantic Monthly. *Of Yankton Sioux descent, Zitkala-Sa (née Gertrude Simmons) won a statewide oratory competition while attending Earlham College in the 1890s. She became a leader of the pan-Indian movement of the 1910s, '20s, and '30s, editing* American Indian Magazine, *lobbying for American Indian citizenship, and founding the National Council of American Indians.*

Amanuenses Then and Now

What a scribe in ancient Babylonia (c. 1792 BC) needed to know:

- Secret meaning of Sumerian words
- Different kinds of calligraphy and occult script
- How to draw up, cover, and seal a document
- All categories of songs and how to conduct a choir
- The technical jargon of silversmiths and jewelers
- The use and technique of various musical instruments

What an administrative assistant in the United States (c. 2008) needs to know:*

- Maintaining an effective records management system
- Proper English usage, including abbreviation and capitalization
- Most ergonomic position for working at a computer terminal
- The best time to prepare daily to-do lists
- The best type of shredder to destroy sensitive material

*According to the International Association of Administrative Professionals

1938: New York City

COLLATERAL LEARNING

Preparation is a treacherous idea. In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. That is the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience. But it is a mistake to suppose that the mere acquisition of a certain amount of arithmetic, geography, history, etc., which is taught and studied because it may be useful at some time in the future, has this effect. And it is a mistake to suppose that acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquired.

Almost everyone has had occasion to look back upon his schooldays and wonder what has become of the knowledge he was supposed to have amassed during his years of schooling, and why it is that the technical skills he acquired have to be learned over again in changed form in order to stand him in good stead. Indeed, he is lucky who does not find that in order to make progress, in order to go ahead intellectually, he does not have to unlearn much of what he learned in school. These questions cannot be disposed of by saying that the subjects were not actually learned, for they were learned at least sufficiently to enable a pupil to pass examinations in them. One trouble is that the subject matter in question was learned in isolation; it was put, as it were, in a watertight compartment. When the question is asked, then, what has become of it, where has it gone to, the right answer is that it is still there in the special compartment in which it was originally stowed away. If exactly the same conditions recurred as those under which it was acquired, it would also recur and be available. But it was segregated when it was acquired and hence is so disconnected from the rest of experience that it is not available under the actual conditions of life. It is contrary to the laws of experience that learning of this kind, no matter how thoroughly ingrained at the time, should give genuine preparation.

Nor does failure in preparation end at this point. Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning. If impetus in this direction is weakened instead of being intensified, something much more than mere lack of preparation takes place. The pupil is actually robbed of native capacities which other-

1179: Rome

FREE SPEECH

Since the church of God like a loving mother is bound to provide for the needy both the things which concern the maintenance of the body and which tend to the profit of souls, in order that the poor, who cannot be assisted by their parents' means, may not be deprived of the opportunity of reading and proficiency, in every cathedral church a competent benefice shall be bestowed upon a master who shall teach the clerks of the same church and poor scholars freely, so that both the necessities of the teacher shall be relieved and the way to learning laid open for the learners.

In other churches, too, or monasteries, if anything shall have been in times past assigned for this purpose, it shall be restored.

For a license to teach no one shall exact money, even if on pretense of any custom he ask anything from those who teach; nor when a license is asked shall he prevent anyone who is fit from teaching. Whoever presumes to contravene this shall be put out from any ecclesiastical benefice.

For it seems to be right that none should have the fruits of his labor in the church of God who, in the greediness of his mind, by selling a license to teach endeavors to prevent the proficiency of churchmen.

From the Third Lateran Council. The Third Lateran Council also prohibited charging fees for the burial of the dead and restricted clerics from visiting, without necessity, the convents of nuns.

wise would enable him to cope with the circumstances that he meets in the course of his life. We often see persons who have had little schooling and in whose case the absence of set schooling proves to be a positive asset. They have at least retained their native common sense and power of judgment, and its exercise in the actual conditions of living has given them the precious gift of the ability to learn from the experiences they have. What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win the ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul; loses his appreciation of things worthwhile, of the values to which these things are relative; if he loses the desire to apply what he has learned and above all, loses the ability to extract meaning from his future experiences as they occur?

What, then, is the true meaning of preparation in the educational scheme? In the first place, it means that a person, young or old, gets out of his present experience all that there is in it for him at the time in which he has it. When preparation is made the controlling end, then the potentialities of the present are sacrificed to a suppositious future. When this happens, the actual preparation for the future is missed or distorted. The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything.

John Dewey, *from* Experience and Education. *Dewey established his reputation as America's foremost educational theorist in the 1890s while acting as the chairman of the department of philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy at the University of Chicago. At the age of seventy-seven in 1937, he headed a commission of inquiry to hear Leon Trotsky's rebuttals to the charges brought against him by the Soviet government.*

Maam Diarra Bousso, Mother of Bamba, Teaching How to Pray, Senegalese painting, twentieth century.

1982: San Francisco

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Minority student—that was the label I bore in college at Stanford, then in graduate school at Columbia and Berkeley: a non-white reader of Spenser and Milton and Austen.

In the late 1960s non-white Americans clamored for access to higher education, and I became a principal beneficiary of the academy's response, its programs of affirmative action. My presence was noted each fall by the campus press office in its proud tally of Hispanic-American students enrolled; my progress was followed

Knowledge is an ancient error reflecting on its youth. —*Francis Picabia, 1949*

by HEW statisticians. One of the lucky ones. Rewarded. Advanced for belonging to a racial group "underrepresented" in American institutional life. When I sought admission to graduate schools, when I applied for fellowships and summer study grants, when I needed a teaching assistantship, my Spanish surname or the dark mark in the space indicating my race—"check one"—nearly always got me whatever I asked for. When the time came for me to look for a college teaching job (the end of my years as a scholarship boy), potential employers came looking for me—a minority student.

Fittingly, it falls to me, as someone who so awkwardly carried the label, to question it now, its juxtaposition of terms—minority, student. For me there is no way to say it with grace. I say it rather with irony sharpened by self-pity. I say it with anger. It is a term that should never have been foisted on me. One I was wrong to accept.

In college one day a professor of English returned my term paper with this comment penciled just under the grade: "Maybe the reason you feel Dickens' sense of alienation so acutely is because you are a minority student." *Minority student.* It was the first time I had seen the expression; I remember sensing that it somehow referred to my race. Never before had a teacher suggested that my academic performance was linked to my racial identity. After class I reread the remark several times. Around me other students were talking and leaving. The professor remained in front of the room, collecting his papers and books. I was about to go up and question his note. But I didn't.

In a way, it was true. I was a minority. The word, as popularly used, did describe me. In the sixties, *minority* became a synonym for socially disadvantaged Americans—but it was primarily a numerical designation. The word referred to entire races and nationalities of Americans, those numerically underrepresented in institutional life. (Thus, without contradiction, one could speak of "minority groups.") And who were they exactly? Blacks—all blacks—most obviously were minorities. And Hispanic Americans. And American Indians. And some others. (It was left to federal statisticians, using elaborate surveys and charts, to determine which others precisely.)

I was a minority.

I believed it. For the first several years, I accepted the label. I certainly supported the racial civil rights movement, supported the goal of broadening access to higher education. But there was a problem: one day I listened approvingly to a government official defend affirmative action; the next day *I* realized the benefits of the program. I was the minority student the political activists shouted about at noontime rallies. Against their rhetoric, I stood out in relief, unrelieved. *Knowing*: I was not really more socially disadvantaged than the white graduate students in my classes. *Knowing*: I was not disadvantaged like many of the new non-white students who were entering college, lacking good early schooling.

The truth was summarized in the sense of irony I'd feel at hearing myself called a minority student: the reason I was no longer a minority was because I had become a student.

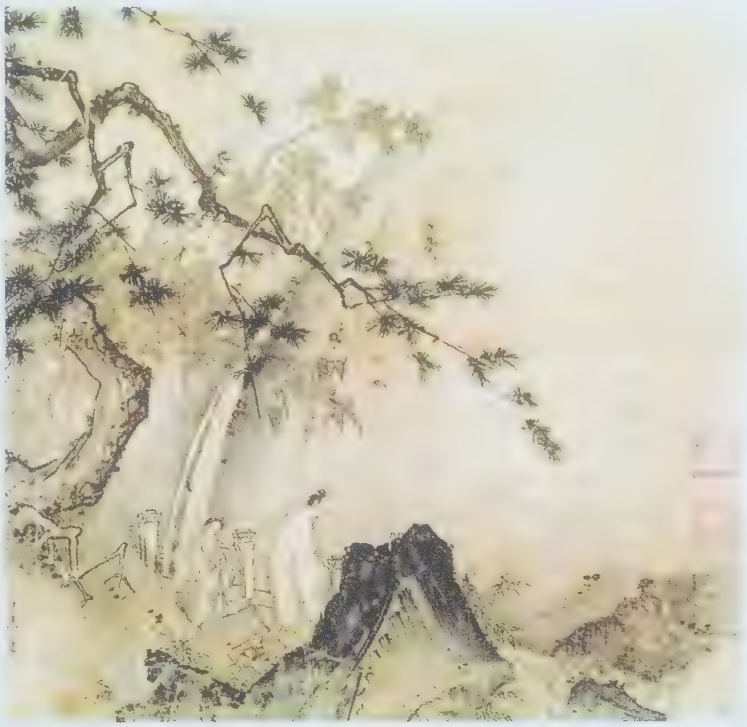
Minority student!

In conversations with faculty members I began to worry the issue, only to be told that my unease was unfounded. A dean said he was certain that after I graduated I would be able to work

among "my people." A senior faculty member expressed his confidence that, though I was unrepresentative of lower-class Hispanics, I would serve as a role model for others of my race. Another faculty member was sure that I would be a valued counselor to incoming minority students. (He assumed that, because of my race, I retained a special capacity for communicating with nonwhite students.) I also heard academic officials say that minority students would someday form a leadership class in America. (From our probable positions of power, we would be able to lobby for reforms to benefit others of our race.)

In 1973 I wrote and had published two essays in which I said that I had been educated away from the culture of my mother and father. In 1974 I published an essay admitting unease over becoming the beneficiary of affirmative action. There was another article against affirmative action in 1977. One more soon after. My essays served as my "authority" to speak at the Marriott Something or the Sheraton Somewhere. To stand at a ballroom podium and hear my surprised echo sound from a microphone. I spoke. I started getting angry letters from activists. One wrote to say that I was becoming the *gringos'* fawning pet. What "they" want all Hispanics to be. I remembered the remark when I was introduced to an all-white audience and heard their applause so loud. I remembered the remark when I stood in a university auditorium and saw an audience of brown and black faces watching me. I publicly wondered whether a person like me should really be termed a minority. But some members of the audience thought I was denying racial pride, trying somehow to deny my racial identity. They rose to protest. One Mexican American said I was a minority whether I wanted to be or not. And he said that the reason I was a beneficiary of affirmative action was simple: I was a Chicano. (Wasn't I?) It was only an issue of race.

For my part I believe the black lawyer who tells me that there is never a day in his life when he forgets he is black. I believe the black business executive who says that, although he drives an expensive foreign car, he must be especially wary when a policeman stops him for speeding.



Scholar by a Waterfall, by Ma Yuan, c. 1190–1225.

I do not doubt that middle-class blacks need to remain watchful when they look for jobs or try to rent or when they travel to unfamiliar towns. "You can't know what it is like for us," a black woman shouted at me one day from an audience somewhere. Like a white liberal, I was awed, shaken by her rage; I gave her the point. But now I must insist, must risk presumption to say that I do not think that all blacks are equally "black." Surely those uneducated and poor will remain most vulnerable to racism. It was not coincidence that the leadership of the Southern civil rights movement was drawn mainly from a well-educated black middle class. Even in the South of the 1950s,

all blacks were not equally black.

All Mexican Americans certainly are not equally Mexican Americans. The policy of affirmative action, however, was never able to distinguish someone like me (a graduate student of English, ambitious for a college teaching career) from a slightly educated Mexican American who lived in a barrio and worked as a menial laborer, never expecting a future improved. Worse, affirmative action made me the beneficiary of his condition. Such was the foolish logic of this program of social reform: because many Hispanics were absent from higher education, I became with my matriculation an exception, a numerical minority. Because I was not a cultural minority,

The great secret of education is to direct vanity to proper objects. —*Adam Smith, 1759*

I was extremely well placed to enjoy the advantages of affirmative action. I was groomed for a position in the multiversity's leadership class.

Remarkably, affirmative action passed as a program of the left. In fact, its supporters ignored the most fundamental assumptions of the classical left by disregarding the importance of class and by assuming that the disadvantages of the lower class would necessarily be ameliorated by the creation of an elite society. The movement that began so nobly in the South, in the North came to parody social reform. Those least disadvantaged were helped first, advanced because many others of their race were more disadvantaged. The strategy of affirmative action, finally, did not take seriously the educational dilemma of disadvantaged students. They need good early schooling! Activists pushed to get more nonwhite students into colleges. Meritocratic standards were dismissed as exclusionary. But activists should have asked why so many minority students could not meet those standards, why so many more would never be in a position to apply. The revolutionary demand would have called for a reform of primary and secondary schools.

I wish as I write these things that I could be angry at those who mislabeled me. I wish I could enjoy the luxury of self-pity and cast myself as a kind of "invisible man." But guilt is not disposed of so easily. The fact is that I complied with affirmative action. I permitted myself to be prized. Even after publicly voicing objections to affirmative action, I accepted its benefits. I continued to indicate my race on applications for financial aid. (It didn't occur to me to leave the question unanswered.) I'd apply for prestigious national fellowships and tell friends that the reason I won was because I was a minority. (This by way of accepting the fellowship money.) I published essays admitting that I was not a minority—saw my byline in magazines and journals which once had seemed very remote from my life. It was a scholarship boy's dream come true. I enjoyed being—not being—a minority student, the featured speaker. I was invited to lecture at schools that only a few years before would have rejected my application for graduate study. My life was unlike that of any other graduate student I knew. On weekends I flew cross-country to say—through a microphone—that I was not a minority.

Someone told me this: a senior faculty member in the English department at Berkeley smirked when my name came up in a conversation. Someone at the sherry party had wondered if the professor had seen my latest article on affirmative action. The professor replied with arch politeness, "And what does Mr. Rodriguez have to complain about?"

You who read this act of contrition should know that by writing it I seek a kind of forgiveness—not yours. The forgiveness, rather, of those many persons whose absence from higher education permitted me to be classed a minority student. I wish that they would read this. I doubt they ever will.

Richard Rodriguez, *from* Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez. *The son of Mexican immigrants, Rodriguez was unable to speak English upon entering a Catholic elementary school in San Francisco. His teachers asked his parents to speak English at home, a request with which they complied. His books include* Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father *and* Brown: The Last Discovery of America.

1910: Chicago

AGAINST ATROPHY

I have seen young girls suffer and grow sensibly lowered in vitality in the first years after they leave school. In our attempt then to give a girl pleasure and freedom from care we succeed, for the most part, in making her pitifully miserable. She finds "life" so different from what she expected it to be. She is besotted with innocent little ambitions and does not understand this apparent waste of herself, this elaborate preparation, if no work is provided for her. There is a heritage of noble obligation which young people accept and long to perpetuate. The desire for action, the wish to right wrong and alleviate suffering haunts them daily. Society smiles at it indulgently instead of making it of value to itself. The wrong to them begins even farther back, when we restrain the first childish desires for "doing good" and tell them that they must wait until they are older and better fitted. We intimate that social obligation begins at a fixed date, forgetting that it begins with birth itself. We treat them as children who, with strong-growing limbs, are allowed to use their legs but not their arms, or whose legs are daily carefully exercised that after awhile their arms may be put to high use. We are fortunate in the meantime if their unused members do not weaken and disappear. They do sometimes. There are a few girls who, by the time they are "educated," forget their old childish desires to help the world and to play with poor little girls "who haven't playthings." Parents are often inconsistent: they deliberately expose their daughters to knowledge of the distress in the world; they send them to hear missionary addresses on famines in India and China; they agitate together over the forgotten region of East London. In addition to this, from babyhood the altruistic tendencies of these daughters are persistently cultivated. They are taught to be self-forgetting and self-sacrificing, to consider the good of the whole before the good of the ego. But when all this information and culture show results, when the daughter comes back from college and begins to recognize her social claim to the "submerged tenth" and to evince a disposition to fulfill it, the family claim is strenuously asserted; she is told that she is unjustified, ill-advised in her efforts. If she persists, the family too often are injured and unhappy unless the efforts are called missionary and the religious zeal of the family carry them over their sense of abuse. When this zeal does not exist, the result is perplexing. It is a curious violation of what we would fain believe a fundamental law—that the final return of the deed is upon the head of the doer. The deed is that of exclusiveness and caution, but the return, instead of falling upon the head of the exclusive and cautious, falls upon a young head full of generous and unselfish plans. The girl loses something vital out of her life to which she is entitled. She is restricted and unhappy; her elders, meanwhile, are unconscious of the situation and we have all the elements of a tragedy.

Learned women are ridiculed because they put to shame unlearned men. —*George Sand*

We have in America a fast-growing number of cultivated young people who have no recognized outlet for their active faculties. They hear constantly of the great social maladjustment, but no way is provided for them to change it, and their uselessness hangs about them heavily. Huxley declares that the sense of uselessness is the severest shock which the human system can sustain and that if persistently sustained, it results in atrophy of function. These young people have had advantages of college, of European travel, and of economic study, but they are sustaining this shock of inaction.

Jane Addams, *from* Twenty Years at Hull-House. *A pacifist, social reformer, and writer, Addams was expelled from the Daughters of the American Revolution for her antiwar protests during World War I. She went on to become the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but she is best remembered for cofounding one of the first settlement houses in the United States.*

1965: Cambridge

FAYE LEVINE IN PURGATORY

The Cliffie: many faces, one soul. Beneath years of straight hair, behind pale lips and eyes, she smiles an eternally self-satisfied secret smile. She is sure of herself even in railroad stations. She walks loudly and firmly on polished floors. She is a Cliffie.

The Cliffie was never virginal. Somewhere in her dim past she discovered the sexual roots of her being, and her mother could never communicate with her thereafter. She is her mother's mother, her father's dream and despair.

All the resources of Harvard go into making her more beautiful. Music, incense, poetry, and human sacrifices she offers to her new boy-god. Among other Cliffies, she speaks not a word about sex; they recognize each other as coreligionists.

The Cliffie sifts through books with an unobtrusive mind. The less she studies, the better her grades. In four years she has whittled her working hours to a fine minimum, so that studying hardly ever interferes with the things she is really interested in. She swings with lectures, taking notes only on what she likes. She debunks Jesus Christ and Sigmund Freud in the same dispassionate breath. Long ago she gave up reading and took up movies. She has seen her favorite films countless times.

But she cannot discuss them. She feels she has lived, experienced, embodied the movies too much to be able to analyze them; she feels she doesn't know enough to judge them. And so she listens fascinated as her men discuss *Marienbad*, putting into words what she has felt deeply, intuitively.

The Cliffie has a lust for wisdom, but no patience for facts. She wants to be accomplished, but hates work. And so she turns from book to book, from activity to activity, wanting to learn and do and see everything at once. Yet all the while she has a dread of being overconscientious, a fear of getting her nails dirty. She withholds something serious and vulnerable of herself. And so it all slips by.

The Cliffie has become cultivated in four years. She runs her fingers over the books in Widener's stacks, stands in awe on the hill between Lamont and Houghton, praises the quiet beauty of Radcliffe Yard at night. She has learned that there is no truth, that all life is ambiguous, many-sided, complex. She knows only the moment and the particular: she can be sure of nothing. She smiles scornfully at a statement that is not demonstrable enough to be science, not mysterious enough to be poetry. For the rest of her life people will hate her for this smile, the unloving smile of a cultivated ignoramus.

Being at Radcliffe means nothing more than being a girl at Harvard. It is a tricky business, since everyone knows that there are no girls at Harvard. Just when you are beginning to forget, to enjoy the myriad resources of this exciting community—*Pow!*—somebody triumphantly points out that you are just a girl and makes you go back to the start.

We are no longer content with only some equality, Harvard. We have been poor relations, little sisters, grateful recipients of charity for just so long. We want football tickets, traveling fellowships, representation on educational policy committees. We share Harvard's hour

Polite Company

Topics considered inadvisable for inclusion on tests according to the Massachusetts Department of Education

Birth control, condoms
Child abuse
Divorce
Incest
Murder
The occult
Pregnancy
Questioning parental authority
Sexual preference or orientation
Weapons

exams; now we want to share its amusements, its benefits, its government.

We want a graduation ceremony that is part of Harvard's. Every school in this university graduates on the same day, in the same place, with so much pomp that you could die; except Radcliffe, which has a little oversightful ceremony next door. Why deny us this? Are we unclean?

We want to share Harvard's libraries, its dining halls. They are fine institutions, far outshining their meager Radcliffe counterparts, and should not be denied to people on the basis of race, creed, house membership, or sex. So long as there is room, let everyone come. It is the only just way. There will always be opportunity for men or women to escape into private retreats when they don't want company of the opposite sex. But to deny it to all, always, is unnatural. Studying and dining should be activities for both sexes, meeting as equals, not only as dates. The students desire this overwhelmingly. It is only the anachronistic pretensions of the adults in control which stand in the way. Let them reconsider, while there is still chance to do so peacefully.

And Radcliffe, oh Radcliffe, how long will you hang onto sign-out books, cards, warnings, pros, estimateds, permissions, one o'clocks? Give your girls the dignity that Harvard boys have: let us out into the world to win or lose, to kill ourselves or find ourselves. Young married couples do not know more than we do about how we should spend our evenings. A time is coming in which young women will no longer have to be kept in padded cells. Face up to it, Radcliffe: it is happening under your nose.

In Erik Erikson's course, Soc Sci 139, we learned how boys are different from girls. One day in class they read aloud the names of all the students who had not shown up for their section for the entire semester. Now, the enrollment was about half-and-half, but the list contained twenty-five boys and only a single girl. These scoffers were greeted by the class at large with affectionate amusement and a grudging respect.

It is no accident that the males far outdid the females in this upside-down achievement. It is always boys who are night people, wasting the hours between 2:00 and 6:00 A.M. in crummy cafeterias and sleeping through their classes. It is boys who take up pool, gin rummy, liquor, marijuana. For many boys, exams are to cram, notes are to copy from someone else, Harvard is to be beaten. From Thomas Wolfe to Teddy Kennedy, boys have flaunted this great university and made good.

But girls would not dream of such a thing. They take the legible notes boys will copy. They attend every lecture. They remember the date of their Graduate Record Exam. Even when they make a token gesture of rebellion, they stay neat, clean, and stylish. Girls, particularly Radcliffe girls, are the pillars of civilization, the rock without which the destructive male force would undermine society. In short, they are finks.

Praise us, oh high school teachers of the world, for being good pupils. Train our handwriting. Reward our citizenship. Get us to internalize the all-important values of punctuality and tidiness.

But until females learn to chuck the whole business out the window, don't expect anything great from us.

Radcliffe is nowhere. Its essence is its own nonexistence. Besides the spiritual shells that are desks and dressers, there is nothing. The piano music in the dormitories speaks sadly, nostalgically, of a Radcliffe that perhaps once was, but is no more.

We were never part of something. It just was: here, inorganic, like a great hulk without beginning or end. We passed it by, we touched it like home base for four years, but we didn't dwell in it. It was nothing, blank, dumb. Harvard was reality, the beginning and the end, everything: but for us, always a dream. Harvard was reality, but through a glass.

When they ask us where we were these four years, what can we say? We were nowhere.

From "The Girls Who Go to Harvard," published in the Harvard-Radcliffe yearbook. Levine in the 1960s became the first woman to serve as the executive editor of the Harvard Crimson. *In 1983 she published a largely autobiographical account of college life,* Splendor and Misery: A Novel of Harvard.

2004: Beslan

SCHOOL UNDER SIEGE

Raisa Kambulatovna is sixty-two. On September 1 she had been a schoolteacher for forty years. "Could I have imagined that I would spend my anniversary not receiving flowers, but under a hail of bullets?" Like many experienced teachers, Raisa Kambulatovna sits very upright and holds her head high, even now when a campaign has started in Beslan—deliberately fomented by the intelligence services and agents from the procurator general's office—to seek "the killers" among the teachers who survived.

That which is evil is soon learned.

—John Ray, 1670

"Yes, they're trying to shift the blame onto us, as if to say, 'They can't have done their duty toward the children if they survived and the children didn't.' Don't imagine anyone could have done anything to save anyone. There was nothing to be done, either before the explosion or after it. The duty of the teachers in there was to be an older friend, to set an example and give the children strength. That's exactly what they did until the explosion. After that there was nothing anybody could do. By September 3 everybody was completely dazed, having hallucinations. I tried so hard to protect Aslan, but at the very end I was unable to save him.

"On September 1 we had been among the first to be herded into the gymnasium because our class, 2A, was at the front of the procession, near the school doors. I sat down in the hall in front of my class. At my back were pupils and their parents. The explosives were hanging above me. Artur Kisiev was with his son like everyone else. The fighters said, 'All the daddies come to the front, please.' Five minutes later they shot them in the corridor. That's how two of my pupils lost their fathers, Misikov and Kisiev. I said to my children, 'They won't shoot children.'

"Aslan was lying at my feet and said he was hungry. I did everything I could to feed him. The first evening there was a young mother next to us with a little child who kept crying. She was rocking him, but he wouldn't stop. At first a fighter pointed his rifle at her as if ordering her to keep him quiet. Then he gave a deep sigh and took out a bottle of water. 'This is my water. Give it to the child. And here are two Mars bars. Get him to suck them through a cloth.' The mother was afraid it was poison but I said to her, 'We're not going to get out of this alive anyway. At least let the child quieten down now.' She broke off a piece of one of the bars and gave it to the child to suck through some cloth. The remainder, one and a half of their Mars bars, I hid behind my back. I broke off a big piece for Aslan and quietly gave the rest to the children from my class.

"The second night, when everybody was terribly thirsty and they weren't letting any of the children go to the toilet, I said, 'Just do it on the floor.' They relaxed and started doing as I suggested. The boys were given cutoff bottles to pee in. I told them to drink from them. The children didn't want to, so then I drank some of the urine of the oldest pupil, a boy in the sixth grade who had been in my class in the primary school. I didn't even hold my nose, so that the children should see it wasn't that bad. After that they started drinking it—Aslan, too. On the morning of September 3 Karina Melikova, a girl in the fifth grade, unexpectedly asked to go to the toilet. They let her out and her mother, who teaches one of the primary classes, told her to pull some leaves off the houseplants in the office, because they let them go to the toilet in the office where they had broken a hole in the floor. Karina managed to pull off some leaves, hide them between the pages of a notebook, and bring them back to the hall. We gave the leaves to the children and Aslan ate one that second day. Karina and her mother were both killed. Whose fault is that? I lost Aslan at the very last moment.

"Immediately before the assault many people were feeling very ill. Some were lying there unconscious and being trodden on. Taisya Khetagurova, the teacher of Ossetian lan-

guage, wasn't well. I crawled over to pull her to the wall, to stop her being trodden on, and left Aslan for a moment. And that was it. I didn't hear the explosion or the shooting. The world simply disappeared. I came to when special-operations troops trod on me. They just walked over our bodies and they walked over me too. I began to be able to feel again and started crawling out. There were bodies beside me, piled one on top of another. Why did I survive and not them? Why did seven of my second-grade pupils die, when I, who am already sixty-two, didn't? And where is Aslan? I see him in front of me every night, creeping toward me like a little mouse. His mother is half-dead, I know. I have met her."

Anna Politkovskaya, *from* A Russian Diary. *Politkovskaya won numerous international journalism awards for her reporting from Chechnya. In 2005, speaking to a conference organized by Reporters Without Borders in Vienna, she said, "People sometimes pay with their lives for saying aloud what they think." Less than a year later, she was discovered shot dead in the elevator of her apartment building in Moscow.*

1957: Little Rock

EISENHOWER CALLS IN THE TROOPS

WA0137 NL PD

LITTLE ROCK ARK SEP 30

THE PRESIDENT
THE WHITE HOUSE

WE THE PARENTS OF NINE NEGRO CHILDREN ENROLLED AT LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOUR ACTION IN SAFE GUARDING THEIR RIGHTS HAVE STRENGTHENED OUR FAITH IN DEMOCRACY STOP NOW AS NEVER BEFORE WE HAVE AN ABIDING FEELING OF BELONGING AND PURPOSEFULNESS STOP WE BELIEVE THAT FREEDOM AND EQUALITY WITH WHICH ALL MEN ARE ENDOWED AT BIRTH CAN BE MAINTAINED ONLY THROUGH FREEDOM AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF DEVELOPMENT GROWTH AND PURPOSEFUL CITIZENSHIP STOP WE BELIEVE THAT THE DEGREE TO WHICH PEOPLE EVERYWHERE REALIZE AND ACCEPT THIS CONCEPT WILL DETERMINE IN A LARGE MEASURE AMERICAS TRUE GROWTH AND TRUE GREATNESS STOP YOU HAVE DEMONSTRATED ADMIRABLY TO US THE NATION AND THE WORLD HOW PROFOUNDLY YOU BELIEVE IN THIS CONCEPT STOP FOR THIS WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL AND RESPECTFULLY EXTEND TO YOU OUR HEARTFELT AND LASTING THANKS STOP MAY THE ALMIGHTY AND ALL WISE FATHER OF US ALL PLEASE GUIDE AND KEEP YOU ALWAYS

A telegram sent to President Dwight D. Eisenhower by parents threatened with death if they brought their children to the Little Rock Central High School. Eisenhower sent federal troops to restrain a white, brick-throwing mob. By noon, local police were forced to evacuate the nine students.

c. 580 BC: Persia

BENEVOLENT DESPOTISM

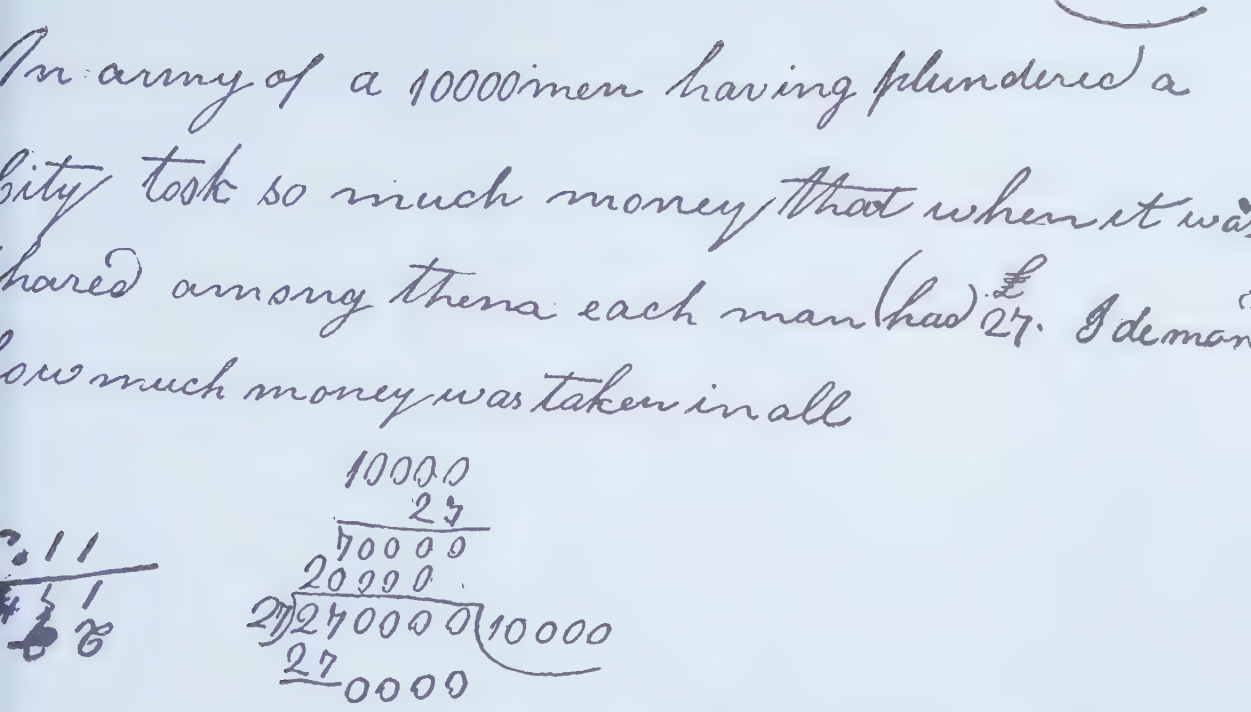
Cyrus was educated in the laws of the Persians. These laws do not seem to begin where they begin in most cities, but by caring for the common good. For most cities allow each to educate his own children however he wants and they allow the adults themselves to live however they please; then they enjoin them not to steal or plunder, not to use violence in entering a house, not to strike whomever it is unjust to strike, not to commit adultery, not to disobey a ruler, and similarly with other such matters. If someone transgresses one of these strictures, they punish him.

But the Persian laws, starting earlier, take care that the citizens will not in the first place even be such as to desire any vile or shameful deed. They exercise this care in the following way: they have a so-called Free Square, where the king's palace and other government buildings have been built. From hence are banished to another place merchandise for sale and its sellers, their cries and their vulgarity, lest their confusion mingle with the good order of the educated. This square by the government buildings is divided into four parts. One of these is for the boys, one for the youths, another for the mature men, another for those who are beyond the years of military service.

The boys who go to school spend their time learning justice. It is said that they go for this purpose, as among us they go to learn their letters. Their rulers spend most of the day judging cases among them, for just as men do, of course, boys also accuse each other of theft, robbery, violence, deceit, calumny, and other such things as are likely; and they take vengeance on whomever they resolve to have done any of these injustices. They punish also whomever they find to be bringing an unjust accusation. They also judge cases of ingratitude, an accusation for which human beings hate each other very much but very rarely adjudicate; and they punish severely whomever they judge not to have repaid a favor he was able to repay, for they think that those who are ungrateful would be especially uncaring also about gods, as well as about parents, fatherland, and friends. Shamelessness seems to follow especially upon ingratitude and it seems in turn to be the greatest leader to everything shameful. They also teach the boys moderation. It contributes greatly to their learning moderation that they see also their elders spending the whole day moderately. They teach them also to obey the rulers. It contributes greatly to this that they see their elders strictly obeying the rulers. They also teach continence in food and drink. It contributes greatly also to this that they do not see their elders going off for food until the rulers dismiss them, and that the boys eat not with their mothers but with their teacher, and not before the rulers give the signal. They carry bread from home as their main food, greens as a relish, and a drinking cup so that if one is thirsty, he may draw up water from the river. In addition to these things they learn how to shoot a bow and to throw a spear. The boys do this until they are sixteen or seventeen years old; after this they enter among the youths.

These youths spend their time in the following way. For ten years after they leave the class of the boys they sleep around the government buildings, both for the city and for moderation, for this age seems especially in need of care. They present themselves to the rulers during the day, in case they should need to use them for the community. And whenever it is necessary, all remain around the government buildings; but when the king goes out for a hunt, he leads out half of the guard with him. And he does this many times during the month. Those who go out must have a bow and quiver, a scimitar or small sword in a sheath, and moreover, a light shield and two spears: one to throw and the other, if need be, to use close at hand.

Xenophon *from the* Cyropaedia. *Xenophon's most famous book, the* Anabasis, *describes the march of ten thousand Greek mercenaries from Babylon to the Black Sea. He also wrote a depiction of Socrates discoursing on the nature of love in his* Symposium, *a work regarded by many scholars as a valuable re-creation of the philosopher's habit of thought.*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Abraham Lincoln His Book

Fragment from a leaf of Abraham Lincoln's exercise book, c. 1819.

1903: Tuskegee

PRAGMATISM

It has been necessary for the Negro to learn the difference between being worked and working—to learn that being worked meant degradation, while working means civilization; that all forms of labor are honorable, and all forms of idleness disgraceful. It has been necessary for him to learn that all races that have got upon their feet have done so largely by laying an economic foundation, and in general, by beginning in a proper cultivation and ownership of the soil.

In a certain way every slave plantation in the South was an industrial school. On these plantations young colored men and women were constantly being trained not only as farmers but as carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, brick masons, engineers, cooks, laundresses, sewing women, and housekeepers.

I do not mean in any way to apologize for the curse of slavery, which was a curse to both races, but in what I say about industrial training in slavery I am simply stating facts. This training was crude and was given for selfish purposes. It did not answer the highest ends, because there was an absence of mental training in connection with the training of the hand. To a large degree though, this business contact with the Southern white man and the industrial training on the plantations left the Negro at the close of the war in possession of nearly all the common and skilled labor in the South.

In most of the industries, though, what happened? For nearly twenty years after the war, except in a few instances, the value of the industrial training given by the plantations was overlooked. Negro men and women were educated in literature, in mathematics, and in the sciences, with little thought of what had been taking place during the preceding 250 years, except perhaps as something to be escaped, to be got as far away from as possible. As a generation began to pass, those who had been trained

as mechanics in slavery began to disappear by death and gradually it began to be realized that there were few to take their places. There were young men educated in foreign tongues but few in carpentry or in mechanical or architectural drawing. Many were trained in Latin but few as engineers and blacksmiths. Too many were taken from the farm and educated, but educated in everything but farming. For this reason they had no interest in farming and did not return to it.

Some years ago, when we decided to make tailoring a part of our training at the Tuskegee Institute, I was amazed to find that it was almost impossible to find in the whole country

The enormous multiplication of books in every branch of knowledge is one of the greatest evils of this age, since it presents one of the most serious obstacles to the acquisition of correct information by throwing in the reader's way piles of lumber in which he must painfully grope for the scraps of useful matter, peradventure interspersed. —*Edgar Allan Poe, c. 1844*

an educated colored man who could teach the making of clothing. We could find numbers of them who could teach astronomy, theology, Latin, or grammar but almost none who could instruct in the making of clothing, something that has to be used by every one of us every day in the year. How often have I been discouraged as I have gone through the South and into the homes of the people of my race, and have found women who could converse intelligently upon abstruse subjects and yet could not tell how to improve the condition of the poorly cooked and still more poorly served bread and meat which they and their families were eating three times a day. It is discouraging to find a girl who can tell you the geographical location of any country on the globe and who does not know where to place the dishes upon a common dinner table. It is discouraging to find a woman who knows much about theoretical chemistry and who cannot properly wash and iron a shirt.

Early in the history of the Tuskegee Institute we began to combine industrial training with mental and moral culture. Our first efforts were in the direction of agriculture, and we began teaching this with no appliances except one hoe and a blind mule. From this small beginning we have grown until now the Institute owns two thousand acres of land, eight hundred of which are cultivated each year by the young men of the school. We began teaching wheelwrighting and blacksmithing in a small way to the men and laundry work, cooking, sewing, and housekeeping to the young women. The fourteen hundred and over young men and women who attended the school during the last school year received instruction—in addition to academic and religious training—in thirty-three trades and industries, including: carpentry, blacksmithing, printing, wheelwrighting, harness making, painting, machinery, founding, shoemaking, brick masonry and brick making, plastering, sawmilling, tinsmithing, tailoring, mechanical and architectural drawing, electrical and steam engineering, canning, sewing, dressmaking, millinery, cooking, laundering, housekeeping, mattress making, basketry, nursing, agriculture, dairying and stock raising, and horticulture.

Not only do the students receive instruction in these trades but they do actual work, by means of which more than half of them pay some part or all of their expenses while remaining at the school. Of the sixty buildings belonging to the school all but four were almost wholly erected by the students as a part of their industrial education. Even the bricks which go into the walls are made by students in the school's brickyard, in which last year they manufactured two million bricks.

Booker T. Washington, *from "Industrial Education for the Negro." At the age of twenty-five, Washington was selected to head the new Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, a school with two buildings and a small endowment. When he died thirty-four years later, the Institute's nearly two hundred faculty members were teaching fifteen hundred students more than thirty-eight trades and professions.*

King's College, Clare College, and punts on the River Cam, Cambridge University, England.

1644: London

MISSPENT YOUTH

The end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection. But because our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in all discreet teaching. And seeing every nation affords not experience and tradition enough for all kind of learning, therefore we are chiefly taught the languages of those people who have at any time been most industrious after wisdom; so that language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known. And though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man as any yeoman or tradesman, competently wise in his mother dialect only.

Hence appear the many mistakes which have made learning generally so unpleasing and so unsuccessful. First we do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek as might be learnt otherwise easily and delightfully in one year. And that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind is our time lost partly in too oft idle vacancies given both to schools and universities, partly in a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations which are the acts of ripest judgment and the final work of a head filled by long reading and observing. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings, like blood out of the nose or the plucking of untimely fruit: besides the ill habit which they get of wretched barbarizing against the Latin and Greek *idiom*, with their untutored *Anglicisms*, odious to be read yet not to be avoided without a well-continued and judicious conversing among pure authors digested, which they scarce taste. Whereas, if after some

preparatory grounds of speech by their certain forms got into memory, they were led to the praxis thereof in some chosen short book lessoned thoroughly to them, they might then forthwith proceed to learn the substance of good things, and arts in due order, which would bring the whole language quickly into their power. This I take to be the most rational and most profitable way of learning languages, whereby we may best hope to give account to God of our youth spent herein.

And for the usual method of teaching arts, I deem it to be an old error of universities not yet well recovered from the Scholastic grossness of barbarous ages, that instead of beginning with arts most easy and those be such as are most obvious to the sense, they present their young unmatriculated novices at first coming with the most intellective abstractions of logic and metaphysics. They, having but newly left those grammatic flats and shallows where they stuck unreasonably to learn a few words with lamentable construction, and now on the sudden transported under another climate to be tossed and turmoiled with their unballasted wits in fathomless and unquiet deeps of controversy, do for the most part grow into hatred and contempt of learning, mocked and deluded all this while with ragged notions and babblements while they expected worthy and delightful knowledge; till poverty or youthful years call them importunately their several ways and hasten them with the sway of friends either to an ambitious and mercenary or ignorantly zealous divinity—some allured to the trade of law, grounding their purposes not on the prudent and heavenly contemplation of justice and equity which was never taught them but on the promising and pleasing thoughts of litigious terms, fat contentions, and flowing fees. Others betake them to state affairs, with souls so unprincipled in virtue and true generous breeding that flattery and court shifts and tyrannous aphorisms appear to them the highest points of wisdom, instilling their barren hearts with a conscientious slavery. Others, lastly, of a more delicious and airy spirit retire themselves to the enjoyments of ease and luxury, living out their days in feast and jollity—which indeed is the wisest and the safest course of all these, unless they were with more integrity undertaken. And these are the fruits of misspending our prime youth at the schools and universities as we do, either in learning mere words or such things chiefly as were better unlearnt.

John Milton, *from "Of Education." Milton was raised to assume a place in the Anglican Church but chose instead to write in every major literary genre of the Renaissance: elegy and epic, ode and sonnet, drama and pastoral. Milton went completely blind in 1651 and, until his death in 1674, he lived with his three daughters who transcribed* Paradise Lost *while secretly selling off volumes from his library.*

1962: Oxford

DAYDREAM

In my daydream College for Bards, the curriculum would be as follows:

1. In addition to English, at least one ancient language, probably Greek or Hebrew, and two modern languages would be required.

2. Thousands of lines of poetry in these languages would be learned by heart.

3. The library would contain no books of literary criticism, and the only critical exercise required of students would be the writing of parodies.

4. Courses in prosody, rhetoric, and comparative philology would be required of all students, and every student would have to select three courses in mathematics, natural history, geology, meteorology, archaeology, mythology, liturgics, cooking.

5. Every student would be required to look after a domestic animal and cultivate a garden plot.

W.H. Auden, *from "The Poet & The City." Auden in 1936 married Thomas Mann's daughter, Erika Mann, a lesbian journalist, to secure her a British passport to flee Nazi Germany. He once said of women, "When people are talking they should retire to the kitchen."*

1988: Pinyudo

EDUCATION WILL BE YOUR MOTHER

We had been at Pinyudo for a few months when something strange happened: they opened the schools. There was a new chairman of the camp named Pyang Deng, a man we all considered compassionate, a man of integrity, a reasonable man who listened. He played with us, he danced with us, and, with the help of the Swedish arm of Save the Children and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, he opened schools for about eighteen thousand refugee children. He called an assembly one day, and because the camp had no chairs or microphones or megaphones at that time, we sat on the dirt and he yelled as best he could.

"Schools will be yours!" he roared.

We cheered.

"You will be the best educated Sudanese in all of history!" he yelled.

Bewildered, we cheered again.

"Now we will build the schools!"

We cheered again, but soon the cheering died down. It dawned on us that the task would come down to us. And it did. The next day, we were sent into the forests to cut trees and collect grass. We were told that the forests were dangerous. There were animals in these forests, they said. And there were local people who considered the forests their own, they said, and were to be avoided. The dangers were many but still we were sent into the forests and almost immediately boys were lost. On the first day, a boy named Bol went into the forest and one part of his leg was found eight days later. Animals had eaten the rest of him.

But the materials were extracted by that time, and the schools went up: four poles for each roof and thatch laid on top, sometimes with

School scene on a cup by the Penthesilea Painter, c. 460–450 BC.

plastic sheeting when available. We built twelve schools in one week, named simply: School One, School Two, School Three, and so on. When we finished building the schools we were called to the open field that became the parade grounds and site of major announcements. Two men spoke to us, one Sudanese and one Ethiopian, the joint educational directors for the camp.

"Now you have schools!" they said.

We cheered.

"Each day, first you will march. After you march, you will attend your classes. And after classes, you will work until your dinner."

Again, our enthusiasm dampened.

By the time school began, most of us had bartered successfully enough to have clothed ourselves, and when we sat down that first day, we really felt like students and the school really seemed like a school. The classrooms were thatched rooms, roofs without walls, and on the first morning of classes, the fifty-one boys sat on the ground and waited. Finally a man strode in and introduced himself as Mr. Kondit. He was a tall man, very thin, with an extraordinarily small skull. He wrote his name on the chalkboard and we were greatly impressed. Only a few among us could recognize any letters at all, but still we stared at the white marks on the board and blinked, happy to watch whatever might happen next.

The first day's lesson covered the alphabet. Mr. Kondit's voice was loud and harsh, sounding impatient at having to explain these things to us. It felt that first day as if he wanted the lesson, all of the lessons of the alphabet and writing and language generally, to be finished in one sweeping hour. He wanted simply to gesture at the alphabet and be done with it.

A B C

He wrote the three letters and read them aloud, demonstrating the sounds they denoted. Because we had no pencils or paper, Mr. Kondit sent us outside. There, we copied the letters into the dirt with sticks or our fingers.

"Make your letters neat!" he barked from his chalkboard. "You have three minutes. If you make a mistake, erase your letter and draw it again. When you have three letters that are to your satisfaction, raise your hand and I will inspect your work." Hands were raised and Mr. Kondit began to make his rounds.

I had never written before; the first time I tried to write a letter "B" in the dirt, Mr. Kondit came behind me and clucked disapprovingly. He leaned over and grabbed my finger roughly, then guided it through the dirt to make the proper "B," pushing my forefinger so hard into the ground that my fingernail cracked and bled.

"You must do better!" he yelled to the crowns of our heads. "You have nothing now, nothing but education. Don't you see this? Our country is in shambles, and the only way we can reclaim it is to learn! Our independence was stolen from us due to the ignorance of our ancestors, and only now can we correct it. Many of you no longer have mothers. You have lost your fathers. But you have education. Here, if you are smart enough to accept it, you will be educated. Education will be your mother. Education will be your father. While your older brothers fight this war with guns, when the bullets stop, you will fight the next war with your pens. Do you see what I'm telling you?"

He was hoarse by now and he grew quiet. "I want you to succeed, boys. If we are ever to have a new Sudan, you must succeed. If I'm ever impatient, it's because I cannot wait for this godforsaken war to end, and for you to assume your role in the future of our ruined land."

On our way back to our shelters, Mr. Kondit was the subject of fascination and debate.

"Did you hear that crazy man?" we said.

"Education is your mother?" we said.

We laughed and did imitations. We thought Mr. Kondit, like more than a few of the men and boys who had crossed the desert to get to Ethiopia, had lost his mind along the way.

Dave Eggers, *from* What Is the What. *After the publication of his best-selling memoir,* A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius, *Eggers gave away a million dollars to around one hundred charities and individuals, among them a hospice in San Francisco and an artist who makes sculptures from Burger King bags.*

c. 796: Tours

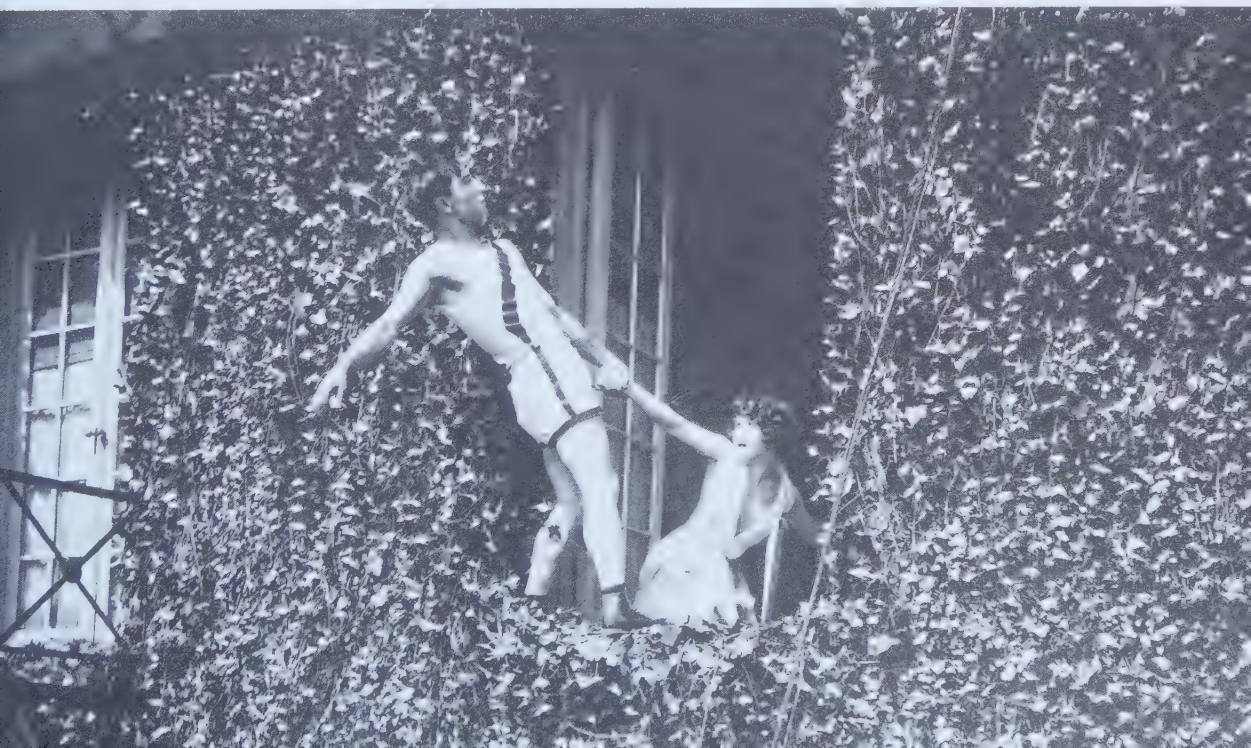
SOWING THE SEEDS OF WISDOM

I, your Flaccus, in accordance with your exhortation and will, do my utmost in the buildings of St. Martin's to provide some with the honey of Holy Scripture, to intoxicate others with the old wine of ancient studies, to feed others with the apples of grammatical subtlety, and to enlighten still others with the marshaling of the stars—which suggests the work of a painter who seeks to beautify for some patron the vaulting of an edifice. Thus I am made many things to many men, that I may train up many to the advancement of the Holy Church of God and to the adornment of your imperial reign, lest the grace of almighty God bestowed upon me, and the bounty of your goodness, be in vain. In some measure, however, I, your servant, lack the choicer books of scholarly erudition which I had in my own country through the devoted industry of my teacher, and even by my own slighter exertions. I say these things to Your Excellency to the end that, if perchance it should please your intent, so desirous of all wisdom, I may be permitted to send over some of our young men to obtain everything we need, and bring back into France the flowers of Britain. In this way not only will York be a garden enclosed, but Tours will have its outflowings of paradise and its pleasant fruits, so that the south wind may come and blow upon the gardens of the Loire, and the spices thereof may flow out.

As far as my moderate abilities will permit, I will not be slothful in sowing the seeds of wisdom among your servants in these parts, being mindful of the sentence, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." In the morning, when my studies because of my time of life were flourishing, I sowed in Britain; now, as my blood grows chill in the evening of my days, I cease not to sow in France, hoping that both, by the grace of God, may spring up.

Alcuin of York, *from a letter to Charlemagne. Between advising Charlemagne and establishing the study of the seven liberal arts, the English churchman promoted the Carolingian minuscule, a script that survives as the basis of uppercase and lowercase type.*

Comedian Buster Keaton in a scene from *College*, 1927.



1931: Berlin

EPISTEMOLOGY

Learn the simplest things. For you
whose time has already come
it is never too late!
Learn your ABC's, it is not enough,
but learn them! Do not let it discourage you,
begin! You must know everything!
You must take over the leadership!

Learn, man in the asylum!
Learn, man in prison!
Learn, wife in the kitchen!
Learn, man of sixty!
Seek out the school, you who are homeless!
Sharpen your wits, you who shiver!
Hungry man, reach for the book: it is a weapon.
You must take over the leadership.

Don't be afraid of asking, brother!
Don't be won over,
see for yourself!
What you don't know yourself,
you don't know.
Add up the reckoning.
It's you who must pay it.
Put your finger on each item,
ask: How did this get here?
You must take over the leadership.

Bertolt Brecht, *"Praise of Learning." Of plays, Brecht once said that "the best thing is to show the machinery, the ropes, and the flies." His theater of alienation directed the audience's attention to what was said rather than felt, reminding them that the play they were seeing was just that: a play.*

1955: New York City

HARD KNOCKS

The block on the west side of Eighth Avenue between Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Streets is given over to the polishing of prizefighters. It has a quiet academic charm, like West One-hundred-and-sixteenth Street when you leave the supermarkets and neighborhood movie houses of upper Broadway and find yourself on the Columbia campus with its ivy-hallowed memories of Sid Luckman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. It is a sleepy block whose modest shops are given over to the needs of the student body—a couple of hock shops, a pet store, and a drugstore which sells bandages and gauze for taping fighters' hands. A careful etiquette reigns in this student quarter, as it is impossible to know if you can lick even the smallest man looking into the pet shop next door to 919 Eighth Avenue, which is the old Dartmouth, or Nassau Hall, of the University of Eighth Avenue.

Old Stillman, as this building is named in honor of the founder, is three stories high, covered with soot instead of ivy and probably older than most Midwestern campuses at that. It is a fine example of a postcolonial structure of indefinable original purpose and looks as if it had been knocked down in the Draft Riots of 1863 and left for dead. It hides its academic light behind a sign which says STILLMAN'S GYM, against a background resembling an oilcloth tablecloth from some historic speakeasy specializing in the indelible red wine of the age of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Warren Gamaliel Harding. Maybe that is where the artist got the canvas; it is an economical neighborhood. The sign also says TRAINING HERE DAILY, and in smaller letters, BOXING INSTRUCTION—SEE JACK CURLEY. This is the university's nearest approach to a printed catalogue. Doctor Lou Stillman, the president, knew when he put out his sign in 1921 that an elaborate plant does not make a great educational institution. In the great schools of the Middle Ages, scholars came to sharpen their wits by mutual disputation. Prizefighters do likewise.

The narrow window of the pet shop is divided by a partition, and the show is always the same. Monkeys on top—which is Stillmanese for "in the feature attraction"—and a tolerant cat playing with puppies underneath, which is Stillmanese for the subordinate portion of the entertainment, as for example a semifinal. Dangling all over the window are parakeets and dog collars. The window draws very good, to stay with the scholastic jargon, before noon, when the fighters are waiting for Old Stillman to open, and around three, when the seminars are breaking up. A boy wins a four-rounder, he buys a parakeet and dreams of the day he will

1621: Oxford

HOMERS WITHOUT AN ACHILLES

'Tis the common fortune of most scholars to be servile and poor, to complain pitifully, to lay open their wants to their respectless patrons, and, which is too common in those dedicatory epistles, for hope of gain to lie, flatter, and with hyperbolical eulogiums and commendations to magnify and extol an illiterate unworthy idiot for his excellent virtues, whom they should rather vilify and rail at downright for his most notorious villainies and vices. So they prostitute themselves as fiddlers or mercenary tradesmen to serve great men's turns for a small reward. They are like Indians: they have store of gold, but know not the worth of it. Great men have their best education, good institution, sole qualification from us, and when they have done well, their honour and immortality from us: we are the living tombs, registers, and so many trumpeters of their fames. What was Achilles without Homer? Alexander without Arrian and Curtius? Who had known the Caesars but for Suetonius and Dion? They are more beholden to scholars, than scholars to them; but scholars undervalue themselves, and so by those great men are kept down.

Robert Burton, *from* The Anatomy of Melancholy. *Writing nearly a hundred years after Burton's death, Bishop Kennett said of the author, an Anglican clergyman subject to fits of depression, "I have heard that nothing could make him laugh, but going down to the bridge-foot in Oxford and hearing the bargemen scold, and storm, and swear at one another, at which he would set his hands to his sides, and laugh most profusely."*

fight on top and own a monkey. There was a time when a boxer's status was reflected by the flash on his finger: now it is by his pet. Floyd Patterson, a brilliant star on the light-heavyweight horizon, owns a cinnamon ringtail.

The modest entrance to Old Stillman is the kind of hallway you would duck into if you wanted to buy marijuana in a strange neighborhood. There are posters for the coming week's metropolitan fight shows—rarely more than one or two nowadays since television has knocked out the nontelevised neighborhood clubs. There is a wide wooden staircase leading up to the gym. Although Dr. Stillman locks a steel grille across the doorway promptly at three, keeps it locked until five-thirty, when working scholars come in for the poor man's session, and then locks it again religiously at seven, the joint always smells wrong. Dr. Stillman, like so many college presidents nowadays, is not himself a teacher but rather an administrator, and the smell in the hall makes him feel there are limits to academic freedom. He is a gaunt man with a beak that describes an arc like an overhand right, bushy eyebrows, a ruff of hair like a frowzy cockatoo, and a decisive, heavily impish manner. He has the reputation of never having taken any lip off anybody, which is plausible, because he seldom gives the other fellow a chance to say anything. In earlier stages of his academic career he used to speak exclusively in shouts, but now that he is in his latter sixties, his voice has mellowed to a confident rasp. The great educator has never, so far as is known, himself put on the gloves; it might prove a psychological mistake. Stillman excels in insulting matriculants so casually that they don't know whether to get sore or not. By the sixth time Stillman has insulted a prizefighter the fighter feels it would be inconsistent to take offense at such a late stage in their personal interrelationship.

Occasionally Dr. Stillman has a problem student who does not know when he is being insulted, and then he has to think up some more subtle psychological stratagem. Tommy (Hurricane) Jackson, a heavyweight who has to be driven out of the gymnasium at the end of every session because he wants to punch the bag some more, has been a recent disciplinary challenge. Jackson, who is six feet two inches tall and of inverse intellectual stature, would occupy a boxing ring all the time if Stillman let him. He would like to box fifteen or thirty rounds a day, but this would be of no value to his fellow students, even those who worked with him, because Jackson is a purely imitative boxer. He waits to see what the other fellow will do and then does it right back at him until the guy drops from exhaustion. Against a jabber he will jab and against a mauler he will maul; it is the exact opposite of Sam Langford's counsel: "Whatever that other man want to do, don't let him do it. Box a fighter and fight a boxer." Jackson will box a boxer, after a fashion, and fight a fighter, in a way, but he can never decide for himself. Knowing this, most boxers who work with him step in with a right to the jaw, planning to knock him out before he can begin his systematic plagiarism. But he has a hard jaw. Whitey and Freddy Brown, his trainers, who are partners, attribute his lack of originality to an emotional conflict, but it has not yielded to any kind of permissive therapy like buying him a .22 rifle to shoot rats, or letting him drink soda pop on fight nights. "He is not too smart of a fellow," Freddy Brown has concluded.

To gain access to the hall of academe you must pass a turnstile guarded by Professor Jack Curley, the assistant to the president who the sign says is the fellow to see about boxing instructions. The sign is as sensible as one would be on the door of Yale saying, INSTRUCTION IN READING AND WRITING, SEE PROFESSOR DOAKES. Old Stillman is no elementary school.

A.J. Liebling, *from "The University of Eighth Avenue." Liebling joined the staff of* The New Yorker *in 1935, landed on the beaches of Normandy as a war correspondent during World War II, and returned to the U.S. to write articles and essays for the magazine on the state of American journalism, boxing, food, and horse racing. He died in New York City in 1963 at the age of fifty-nine.*

1903: Cambridge

WILLIAM JAMES UPROOTS THE GROVE OF ACADEME

Some years ago, we had at our Harvard graduate school a very brilliant student of philosophy, who, after leaving us and supporting himself by literary labor for three years, received an appointment to teach English literature at a sister institution of learning. The governors of this institution, however, had no sooner communicated the appointment than they made the awful discovery that they had enrolled upon their staff a person who was unprovided with the Ph.D. degree. The man in question had been satisfied to work at philosophy for her own sweet (or bitter) sake, and had disdained to consider that an academic bauble should be his reward.

His appointment had thus been made under a misunderstanding. He was not the proper man; and there was nothing to do but to inform him of the fact. It was notified to him by his new president that his appointment must be revoked, or that a Harvard doctor's degree must forthwith be procured.

Although it was already the spring of the year, our subject, being a man of spirit, took up the challenge, turned his back upon literature (which in view of his approaching duties might have seemed his more urgent concern), and spent the weeks that were left him in writing a metaphysical thesis and grinding his psychology, logic, and history of philosophy up again, so as to pass our formidable ordeals.

When the thesis came to be read by our committee, we could not pass it. Brilliancy and originality by themselves won't save a thesis for the doctorate; it must also exhibit a heavy

Aristotle with students of physical science, from a Seljuk Turkish manuscript, thirteenth century.

technical apparatus of learning, and this our candidate had neglected to bring to bear. So, telling him that he was temporarily rejected, we advised him to pad out the thesis properly and return with it next year, at the same time informing his new president that this signified nothing as to his merits, that he was of ultra-Ph.D. quality, and one of the strongest men with whom we had ever had to deal.

To our surprise we were given to understand in reply that the quality per se of the man signified nothing in this connection, and that three magical letters were the thing seriously required. The college had always gloried in a list of faculty members who bore the Doctor's title, and to make a gap in the galaxy and admit a common fox without a tail would be a degradation impossible to be thought of. We wrote again, pointing out that a Ph.D. in philosophy would prove little anyhow as to one's ability to teach literature; we sent separate letters in which we outdid each other in eulogy of our candidate's powers, for indeed they were great. And at last, mirabile dictu, our eloquence prevailed. He was allowed to retain his appointment provisionally, on condition that one year later at the farthest his miserably naked name should be prolonged by the sacred appendage—the lack of which had given so much trouble to all concerned.

A university anywhere can aim no higher than to be as British as possible for the sake of the undergraduates, as German as possible for the sake of the graduates and the research personnel, as American as possible for the sake of the public at large—and as confused as possible for the preservation of the whole uneasy balance. —*Clark Kerr, 1963*

Accordingly he came up here the following spring with an adequate thesis (known since in print as a most brilliant contribution to metaphysics), passed a first-rate examination, wiped out the stain, and brought his college into proper relations with the world again. Whether his teaching, during that first year, of English literature was made any better by the impending examination in a different subject is a question which I will not try to solve.

I have related this incident at such length because it is so characteristic of American academic conditions at the present day. Graduate schools still are something of a novelty and higher diplomas something of a rarity. The latter, therefore, carry a vague sense of preciousness and honor, and have a particularly "up-to-date" appearance, and it is no wonder if smaller institutions, unable to attract professors already eminent, and forced usually to recruit their faculties from the relatively young, should hope to compensate for the obscurity of the names of their officers of instruction by the abundance of decorative titles by which those names are followed on the pages of the catalogues where they appear. The dazzled reader of the list, the parent or student, says to himself, "This must be a terribly distinguished crowd—their titles shine like the stars in the firmament; Ph.D.'s, S.D.'s, and Litt.D.'s, bespangle the page as if they were sprinkled over it from a pepper caster."

Human nature is once for all so childish that every reality becomes a sham somewhere, and in the minds of presidents and trustees the Ph.D. degree is in point of fact already looked upon as a mere advertising resource, a manner of throwing dust in the public's eyes. "No instructor who is not a Doctor," has become a maxim in the smaller institutions which represent demand; and in each of the larger ones which represent supply, the same belief in decorated scholarship expresses itself in two antagonistic passions: one for multiplying as much as possible the annual output of Doctors, the other for raising the standard of difficulty in passing, so that the Ph.D. of the special institution shall carry a higher blaze of distinction than it does elsewhere. Thus, we at Harvard are proud of the number of candidates whom we reject, and of the inability of men who are not distingué in intellect to pass our tests.

America is thus as a nation rapidly drifting toward a state of things in which no man of science or letters will be accounted respectable un-

less some kind of badge or diploma is stamped upon him, and in which bare personality will be a mark of outcast estate. It seems to me high time to rouse ourselves to consciousness and to cast a critical eye upon this decidedly grotesque tendency. Other nations suffer terribly from the Mandarin disease. Are we doomed to suffer like the rest?

Is not our growing tendency to appoint no instructors who are not also Doctors an instance of pure sham? Will anyone pretend for a moment that the doctor's degree is a guarantee that its possessor will be successful as a teacher? Notoriously his moral, social, and personal characteristics may utterly disqualify him for success in the classroom; and of these characteristics his examination is unable to take any account whatever. Certain bare human beings will always be better candidates for a given place than all the Doctor applicants on hand; and to exclude the former by a rigid rule, and in the end to have to sift the latter by private inquiry into their personal peculiarities among those who know them, just as if they were not Doctors at all, is to stultify one's own procedure. You may say that at least you guard against ignorance of the subject by considering only the candidates who are Doctors; but how then about making Doctors in one subject teach a different subject? This happened in the instance by which I introduced this article, and it happens daily and hourly in all our colleges. The truth is that the Doctor monopoly in teaching, which is becoming so rooted an American custom, can show no serious grounds whatsoever for itself in reason. As it actually prevails and grows in vogue among us, it is due to childish motives exclusively. In reality it is but a sham, a bauble, a dodge, whereby to decorate the catalogues of schools and colleges.

The more widespread becomes the popular belief that our diplomas are indispensable hallmarks to show the sterling metal of their holders, the more widespread these corruptions will become. We ought to look to the future carefully, for it takes generations for a national custom, once rooted, to be grown away from. All the European countries are seeking to diminish the check upon individual spontaneity which state examinations with their tyrannous growth have brought in their train. We have had to institute state examinations, too; and it will perhaps be fortunate if someday hereafter our descendants, comparing machine with machine, do not sigh with regret for old times and American freedom, and wish that the regime of the dear old bosses might be reinstalled—with plain human nature, the glad hand and the marble heart, liking and disliking, and man-to-man relations grown possible again. Meanwhile, whatever evolution our state examinations are destined to undergo, our universities at least should never cease to regard themselves as the jealous custodians of personal and spiritual spontaneity. They are indeed its only organized and recognized custodians in America today. They ought to guard against contributing to the increase of officialism and snobbery and insincerity as against a pestilence; they ought to keep truth and disinterested labor always in the foreground, treat degrees as secondary incidents, and in season and out of season make it plain that what they live for is to help men's souls, not to decorate their persons with diplomas.

> *The ceaseless, senseless demand for original scholarship in a number of fields, where only erudition is now possible, has led either to sheer irrelevancy, the famous knowing of more and more about less and less, or to the development of a pseudo-scholarship which actually destroys its object.* —*Hannah Arendt, 1972*

From "The Ph.D. Octopus." At Harvard University in 1872 the elder brother of the novelist Henry James embarked on a professorial career antithetical to the specialization he abhorred, acting at different times as a professor of physiology, psychology, and philosophy. Over a span of thirty-five years he educated, among others, Theodore Roosevelt, W.E.B. Du Bois, George Santayana, and Gertrude Stein.

THE EXPERIMENT

1995: Parris Island

TEACHING FAMILY VALUES

Sergeant Biehl, in a private moment, sums up the mission of Parris Island this way, "The Marine Corps is like a family, and we teach family values."

As if to underscore that they have entered a new world, Staff Sergeant Biehl begins to teach them a new language. Its peculiarly nautical tone grows out of the Marines' origins as a sea service. "We don't call it a floor, we call it a deck," he lectures, striding purposefully back and forth at the front of the desks. "We don't call it a door, we call it a hatch." For no apparent reason relating to the sea, writing pens are now to be called ink sticks and sneakers are go-fasters.

Then he introduces them to another aspect of language on Parris Island: orders generally are issued in the future imperative, the drill instructor's favorite verb tense. "You are going to write this number," Staff Sergeant Biehl says, perfectly confident that they will. "Three-zero-eight-six." They use Magic Markers to write the four numbers on their left hands. "This is now your platoon number," he says. "You are now part of Platoon Thirty Eighty-six." That number is now more important than their own names.

With a unit assigned, the recruits now have an address, which means they can mail a letter home and tell their families how to contact them. Then they are given the letter to mail: it is from Colonel Humberto "Rod" Rodriguez, commanding officer of the Recruit Training Regiment. "Your Marine recruit has arrived safely at Parris Island," the letter states. "We have instructed him to write to you regularly."

Recruits alert enough to scan the letter get a hint of the pace that awaits them. "Please do not be alarmed if his first letters to you report that he has not received any mail yet," it continues. "Due to the rigorous training, recruits lose track of days."

The colonel's letter then gets to the point of Parris Island: "Our responsibility in the Recruit Training Regiment is to transform your young man and thousands like him from a civilian into a basically trained Marine, capable of accepting full responsibility for his present and future roles in our Corps.... In the process, he must prove to himself, his comrades, and his officers and drill instructors that he is worthy of the respect and confidence which are part of our title and uniform."

Next, as if they were entering prison, the recruits inventory the civilian clothes they are about to place in a brown bag. (Lacking civilian clothes makes it much harder for recruits to flee the island.) "We don't call them pants, we

Students at the Bolshoi Ballet School in Moscow, 1958. Photograph by Cornell Capa.

call them trousers," the sergeant helpfully reminds the newcomers. Moving back to the future imperative, the sergeant says, "Right now, all jewelry will come off your body."

Johnny Thomas Jr., a skinny black recruit from Delray Beach, Florida, not destined to make it through Parris Island, finds this order somehow humorous or embarrassing, and looks up at the sergeant with a slight smile. Unfortunately, he has a gold tooth in the middle of the

A whale ship was my Yale College and my Harvard. —*Herman Melville, 1851*

smile that catches the sergeant's eye. "On your feet," Sergeant Biehl shouts, charging at him and waving a finger a few inches in front of his month. "I guarantee you that in the next couple of hours I'll wipe that smile off your face."

It is a very credible threat. Recruit Thomas' smile is gone in seconds. The sergeant resumes the in-processing. "Now, this is your last chance to cough up anything that shouldn't be on your body." Without explanation, he orders them to turn over any weapons, knives, cigarettes, matches, lighters, candy, food, gum, soda, drugs of any kind, liquids of any kind, dice, playing cards, subversive material, "pornographic material, naked pictures of your girlfriend or mother, rubbers, prophylactics, or any of that trash, put them in that orange crate right now, 'cause you ain't got any need of that now."

At 2:50 A.M., precisely one hour after meeting the bus, he ushers them into the next room and turns them over to Sergeant Ansil Lewis, a fine-boned infantry scout from the Virgin Islands who will run Platoon 3086 for the next three days.

Sergeant Lewis begins with the next big step in the disorientation process: he withdraws from the recruits the right to use the first person. Their first names are also banished. "From now on, you are no longer he, she, it, or whatever you was," he says in a clear, quiet voice. "You are now 'Recruit-and-your-last-name,' understand?" Coming from a society that elevates the individual, they are now in a world where the group is supreme. Using "I" raises suspicions: Why would you care more about your self than about your unit? You are 3086.

Sergeant Lewis' second move is to emphasize that no matter what they are doing, they are not doing it fast enough. He moves them in a single file toward the barber's stand in the back of the receiving station. "Let's go. Hurry up. Hurry. Tighter."

Buzz cuts begin at 3:30 A.M. and take twenty-five seconds per recruit. For some, six months' growth of hair flutters to the floor with each stroke of the barber's shaver. The barber is a broken-down-looking civilian wearing a black T-shirt inscribed in red letters with the words PAIN FEAR IRONY DESPAIR DEATH. It is an unusual job, shaving the heads of terrified young men in the middle of the night. He doesn't speak as he does it. The recruits emerge from the barber's cubbyhole in the back of the receiving station and are made to line up in unnatural proximity, each recruit's toes almost touching the heel of the one before them, crotches within a foot of the buttocks of the recruit in front. This is far closer than the "comfort zone" of most Americans, especially adolescent males. But they already know enough to remain absolutely silent. As the last of the platoon is being shorn, Sergeant Lewis, in keeping with the drill instructor's ethic of using every available moment, begins teaching the shaveheads. "Whenever a drill instructor says, 'Ears,' you say, 'Open.' Whenever a drill instructor says, 'Eyeballs,' you say, 'Snap.'"

He plucks out two recruits to sweep the hair. He hurries them along, as DIs always do, by irritatedly saying, "Any day."

Then they are marched through a supply room and issued all the clothes they will wear and everything else they will need for eleven weeks, including such unique items as "rifle towels," which carry printed outlines showing where to place each piece of the M-16 as it is cleaned. The issuing clerk, an old man in casual civilian clothes, says the Marines used to do this in a roughshod way, having a sergeant distribute the gear and screaming at the recruits

as they ran through, but found that caused so much trouble with confusion over equipment that they civilianized the task.

They carry their gear upstairs to the receiving barracks, a big unsympathetic chamber where identities evaporate. With its empty white cinderblock walls and bare floor, furnished only with sheetless mattresses on bunk beds, it may be the world's most anonymous room. The regular barracks on Parris Island at least display Marine Corps signs and instructive material on their walls; this lacks even the graffiti of a drunk tank. It offers absolutely no clues. It is 4:00 A.M., an empty hour. A recruit chancing on a mirror might not even recognize his own pasty-white, hairless head.

The beds are inviting. But Platoon 3086 has long to go before it will sleep. Instead, at 4:50 A.M., Sergeant Lewis begins teaching it to toe the line. Literally. He assembles them along the two white lines painted the length of the spartan barracks. "Right in front of you is a little line," he says. "I want you to put your toe on it."

The sergeant then teaches them a few basic elements of how to walk in formation—"Left foot strikes the deck"—and marches them to the Third Battalion's mess hall. "When we go to the chow hall, nobody's going to run their mouth, understand?" he orders. The platoon moves through the windswept trees, a flashlight in each of their forty-seven hands, with forty-seven beams of light swinging and catching spooky glimpses of Spanish moss hanging from live oaks. Steam swirls around the platoon from the island's overground heating pipes. A fat raccoon squats and watches the group move by, its eyes flashing red in the swinging beams. It is an exotic and unsettling environment to the recruits from the cities and farms of the North, where palm trees and sea breezes signify vacation luxury, not boot camp.

The scene outside the mess hall in the predawn darkness is bewildering to outsiders. Young men appear in formation and move quickly amid great shouting, ranks of four peeling off at a time, but it isn't apparent how this high-energy system works, or why it requires continual yelling and stomping. Amidst this inexplicable whirl, 3086 stands in ragged formation on the veranda of the mess hall, a small rock in a rushing rapid. No one explains anything to it. "The disorientation is part" of the receiving process, says Master Sergeant Wilbert Altman, a receiving sergeant. "They never know what's going to happen next."

Thomas E. Ricks, *from* Making the Corps. *The island off the coast of South Carolina was used as an outpost for Spanish missionaries in the 1520s, served as a coaling station for Union ships during the Civil War, and in 1915 became a Marine Corps Recruit Depot.*

Fighting practice, from *Chronicle of Bertrand du Guesclin*, France, fourteenth century.

The Comical Hotch-Potch, or the Alphabet Turn'd Posture-Master, print by Carrington Bowles, 1782.

c. 1912: Sussex

GEORGE ORWELL LEARNS HIS LESSON

Crossgates was an expensive and snobbish school which was in the process of becoming more snobbish, and, I imagine, more expensive. The public school with which it had special connections was Harrow, but during my time an increasing proportion of the boys went on to Eton. Most of them were the children of rich parents, but on the whole they were the unaristocratic rich, the sort of people who live in huge shrubberied houses in Bournemouth or Richmond, and who have cars and butlers but not country estates. There were a few exotics among them—some South American boys, sons of Argentine beef barons, one or two Russians, and even a Siamese prince, or someone who was described as a prince.

Sim, the headmaster, had two great ambitions. One was to attract titled boys to the school and the other was to train up pupils to win scholarships at public schools, above all Eton. He did, toward the end of my time, succeed in getting hold of two boys with real English titles. One of them, I remember, was a wretched little creature, almost an albino, peering upward out of weak eyes, with a long nose at the end of which a dewdrop always seemed to be trembling. Sim always gave these boys their titles when mentioning them to a third person, and for their first few days he actually addressed them to their faces as "Lord So-and-so." Needless to say he found ways of drawing attention to them when any visitor was being shown round the school. Once, I remember, the little fair-haired boy had a choking fit at dinner, and a stream of snot ran out of his nose onto his plate in a way horrible to see. Any lesser person would have been called a dirty little beast and ordered out of the room instantly, but Sim and Bingo laughed it off in a "boys will be boys" spirit.

All the very rich boys were more or less undisguisedly favored. The school still had a faint suggestion of the Victorian "private academy" with its "parlor boarders," and when I lat-

er read about that kind of school in Thackeray I immediately saw the resemblance. The rich boys had milk and biscuits in the middle of the morning, they were given riding lessons once or twice a week, Bingo mothered them and called them by their Christian names, and above all they were never caned. Apart from the South Americans, whose parents were safely distant, I doubt whether Sim ever caned any boy whose father's income was much above £2,000 a year. But he was sometimes willing to sacrifice financial profit to scholastic prestige. Occasionally, by special arrangement, he would take at greatly reduced fees some boy who seemed likely to win scholarships and thus bring credit on the school. It was on these terms that I was at Crossgates myself: otherwise my parents could not have afforded to send me to so expensive a school.

I did not at first understand that I was being taken at reduced fees; it was only when I was about eleven that Bingo and Sim began throwing the fact in my teeth. For my first two or three years I went through the ordinary educational mill: then, soon after I had started Greek (one started Latin at eight, Greek at ten), I moved into the scholarship class, which was taught, so far as classics went, largely by Sim himself. Over a period of two or three years the scholarship boys were crammed with learning as cynically as a goose is crammed for Christmas. And with what learning! This business of making a gifted boy's career depend on a competitive examination, taken when he is only twelve or thirteen, is an evil thing at best, but there do appear to be preparatory schools which send scholars to Eton, Winchester, etc., without teaching them to see everything in terms of marks. At Crossgates the whole process was frankly a preparation for a sort of confidence trick. Your job was to learn exactly those things that would give an examiner the impression that you knew more than you did know, and as far as possible to avoid burdening your brain with anything else. Subjects which lacked examination value such as geography were almost completely neglected; mathematics was also neglected if you were a "classical"; science was not taught in any form—indeed it was so despised that even an interest in natural history was discouraged—and the books you were encouraged to read in your spare time were chosen with one eye on the "English Paper." Latin and Greek, the main scholarship subjects, were what counted, but even these were deliberately taught in a flashy, unsound way. We never, for example, read right through even a single book of a Greek or Latin author: we merely read short passages which were picked out because they were the kind of thing likely to be set as an "unseen translation." During the last year or so before we went up for our scholarships, most of our time was spent in simply working our way through the scholarship papers of previous years. Sim had sheaves of these in his possession from every one of the major public schools. But the greatest outrage of all was the teaching of history.

> *Anyone who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape.*
>
> *—William Hazlitt, 1821*

There was in those days a piece of nonsense called the Harrow History Prize, an annual competition for which many preparatory schools entered. At Crossgates we mugged up every paper that had been set since the competition started. They were the kind of stupid question that is answered by rapping out a name or a quotation. Who plundered the Begams? Who was beheaded in an open boat? Who caught the Whigs bathing and ran away with their clothes? Almost all our historical teaching was on this level. History was a series of unrelated, unintelligible but—in some way that was never explained to us—important facts with resounding phrases tied to them. Disraeli brought peace with honor. Clive was astonished at his moderation. Pitt called in the New World to redress the balance

of the Old. And the dates, and the mnemonic devices! (Did you know, for example, that the initial letters of, "A black Negress was my aunt: there's her house behind the barn," are also the initial letters of the battles in the Wars of the Roses?) Bingo, who "took" the higher forms in history, reveled in this kind of thing. I recall positive orgies of dates, with the keener boys leaping up and down in their places in their eagerness to shout out the right answers, and at the same time not feeling the faintest interest in the meaning of the mysterious events they were naming.

"1587?"

"Massacre of St. Bartholomew!"

"1707?"

"Death of Aurangzeeb!"

"1713?"

"Treaty of Utrecht!"

"1773?"

"The Boston Tea Party!"

"1520?"

"Oo, Mum, please, Mum—"

"Please, Mum, please, Mum! Let me tell him, Mum!"

"Well; 1520?"

"Field of the Cloth of Gold!"

And so on.

But history and such secondary subjects were not bad fun. It was in classics that the real strain came. Looking back I realize that I then worked harder than I have ever done since, and yet at the time it never seemed possible to make quite the effort that was demanded of one. We would sit round the long shiny table, made of some very pale-colored hardwood, with Sim goading, threatening, exhorting, sometimes joking, very occasionally praising, but always prodding—prodding away at one's mind to keep it up to the right pitch of concentration, as one might keep a sleepy person awake by sticking pins into him.

"Go on, you little slacker! Go on, you idle, worthless little boy! The whole trouble with you is that you're bone and horn idle. You eat too much, that's why. You wolf down enormous meals, and then when you come here you're half asleep. Go on, now, put your back into it. You're not *thinking*. Your brain doesn't sweat."

He would tap away at one's skull with his silver pencil, which, in my memory, seems to have been about the size of a banana, and which certainly was heavy enough to raise a bump: or he would pull the short hairs round one's ears, or occasionally, reach out under the table and kick one's shin. On some days nothing seemed to go right, and then it would be: "All right, then, I know what you want. You've been asking for it the whole morning. Come along, you useless little slacker. Come into the study." And then *whack*, *whack*, *whack*, *whack*, and back one would come, red-wealed and smarting—in later years Sim had abandoned his riding crop in favor of a thin rattan cane which hurt very much more—to settle down to work again. This did not happen very often, but I do remember more than once being led out of the room in the middle of a Latin sentence, receiving a beating, and then going straight ahead with the same sentence, just like that. It is a mistake to think such methods do not work. They work very well for their special purpose. Indeed, I doubt whether classical education ever has been or can be successfully carried on without corporal punishment. The boys themselves believed in its efficacy. There was a boy named Beacham, with no brains to speak of, but evidently in acute need of a scholarship. Sim was flogging him toward the goal as one might do with a foundered horse. He went up for a scholarship at Uppingham, came back with a consciousness of having done badly, and a day or two later received a severe beating for idleness. "I wish I'd had that caning before I went up for the exam," he said sadly—a remark which I felt to be contemptible but which I perfectly well understood.

From "Such, Such Were the Joys." Orwell won a scholarship to Eton College, attending in 1917 and studying with Aldous Huxley. After serving in the British civil service in Burma, washing dishes in Paris, and fighting fascists in Spain, Orwell in 1943 became the literary editor of Tribune, *a prominent leftist periodical in London. He published* Animal Farm *in 1945 and* Nineteen Eighty-Four *in 1949.*

c. 90: Rome

TALENT IS MEMORY

As soon as a boy is entrusted to him, the skilled teacher will first spy out his ability and his nature. In children, the principal sign of talent is memory. There are two virtues of memory: quickness of grasp and accurate retention. Next comes imitation; this also is a mark of a teachable nature, provided that it is exercised on what he is learning, not on someone's bearing or walk or some observable defect. I shall not form any expectation of good qualities, if the object of those efforts at imitation is to raise a laugh. The really gifted will also be a good boy. In any case, I cannot think it worse to be stupid than to be bad, but the good boy will be anything but a dullard or a lazybones. My ideal pupil will absorb instruction without difficulty and even ask some questions, but he will follow rather than anticipate the teacher. Those precocious intellects do not readily come to fruition. They are the boys who do small things easily and then, emboldened by this, quickly show what it is that they can do—and this is just what lies nearest at hand: they string words together and bring them out with a bold face, uninhibited by any feelings of modesty. They have little to offer, but what there is comes quickly. There is no real underlying force that has any deep roots: it is like seed scattered on the surface of the soil; it comes up too quickly, the blade looks like a full ear, but it turns yellow before the harvest, and there is no substance in the crop. These things give pleasure, taking the age into account; but then progress stops, and admiration declines.

The Drawing Lesson, by Domenico Maggiotto, eighteenth century.

Having noticed all this, the teacher must next consider how the pupil's mind should be handled. Some are idle unless you press them; others are impatient of discipline. Fear restrains some and paralyzes others. Some need continuous effort to knock them into shape; with others, the sudden attack is more effective. Give me a boy who is encouraged by praise, pleased by success, and who cries when he has lost. He is the one who will be be nourished by ambition, hurt by reproof, and excited by honor. In him I shall never have to fear laziness.

Those who claim to know everything and to settle everything end up killing everything. The day comes when they have no other rule but murder, no other science than the poor scholastic arguments which occasionally serve to justify murder.

—Albert Camus, 1948

However, everyone must be given some relaxation, not only because there is nothing that can stand perpetual strain—even things which are without sense or life need to be relaxed by periods of rest in order to preserve their strength—but also because study depends on the will to learn, and this cannot be forced. Thus renewed and refreshed, they will bring to their learning both more energy and that keener spirit which so often resists compulsion. I am not bothered by playfulness in the young (it is a sign of a lively mind), nor would I ever expect a gloomy and perpetually depressed boy to show alertness in his work, lacking as he is also in the energy which is particularly natural at his age. But there must be moderation in holidays: if we refuse them, the boys will hate their work; if there are too many, they will get used to being idle. There are even some games which are useful for sharpening the wits, for example competitions in which they ask one another all sorts of little questions. Character reveals itself more naturally in games—but bear in mind that no age is too immature to learn straight away what is right and what is wrong, and that the best age for forming character is when they do not know how to pretend, but obey their teachers most readily. It is easier to break than to straighten anything which has hardened into a bad shape. There must be no delay, then, in warning the boy that he must not behave greedily, dishonestly, or without controlling himself. Let us always keep in mind the words of Virgil: "So strong is habit in the tender plant."

Flogging a pupil is something I do not at all like. In the first place, it is humiliating and proper only for slaves; and certainly it is an infringement of rights. Secondly, if a boy is so lacking in self-respect that reproof is powerless to put him right, he will even become hardened to blows, like the worst type of slave. And finally, there will be no need for this form of punishment if there is always someone there to make sure the work gets done. Though you may compel a child with blows, what can you do with a young man who cannot be threatened like this and who has more important lessons to learn? When children are beaten, the pain and fear often have results which it is not pleasant to speak of and which will later be a source of embarrassment. This shame breaks and depresses the spirits, and leads the child to shun and loathe the light of day.

If not enough care has been taken about the character of the supervisors or teachers, I blush to mention the shameful purposes for which evil men abuse their right to flog, and what opportunities the terror felt by these poor children sometimes gives. I will not dwell on this subject: what I am hinting at is already too much. It is enough to observe that no one ought to be allowed too much power over helpless and easily victimized young people.

Quintilian, *from* Institutio Oratoria. *Born in northern Spain, Quintilian became Rome's first state-salaried teacher of Latin rhetoric during the rule of Emperor Vespasian in the 70s. He remained the empire's most celebrated educator under Titus and Domitian, entrusted with the instruction of the latter's two heirs in the early 90s.*

1826: Baltimore

FREDERICK DOUGLASS TAKES THE ELL

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the ABC's. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful as well as unsafe to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning will *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," he said, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences

Socrates depicted in a fresco in Ephesus, Turkey, first century.

of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he

I would rather entertain and hope that people learned something than educate people and hope they were entertained.

—Walt Disney

so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct but had set her face against my being instructed by anyone else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tenderhearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tenderhearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practice her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated to her satisfaction that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

From Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. *Having escaped from slavery in 1838, the author changed his surname from "Bailey" to "Douglass" to elude capture. In 1841 Douglass became an agent for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, giving eloquent speeches in the North; four years later he published his autobiography in part to quiet skeptics claiming that no ex-slave could be so articulate.*

Target practice at the Women's Police Academy of Tehran, Iran, 2004. Photograph by Alexandra Boulat.

1924: Seattle

MARY MCCARTHY AVOIDS DAMNATION

The following Wednesday brought me the happiest moment of my life. In order to understand my happiness, which might otherwise seem perverse, the reader must yield himself to the spiritual atmosphere of the convent. If he imagines that the life we led behind those walls was bare, thin, cold, austere, sectarian, he will have to revise his views; our days were a tumult of emotion. In the first place, we ate, studied, and slept in that atmosphere of intrigue, rivalry, scandal, favoritism, tyranny, and revolt that is common to all girls' boarding schools and that makes "real" life afterward seem a long and improbable armistice, a cessation of the true anguish of activity. But above the tinkling of this girlish operetta, with its clink-clink of changing friendships, its plot of smuggled letters, notes passed from desk to desk, secrets, there sounded in the Sacred Heart convent heavier, more solemn strains, notes of a great religious drama, which was also all passion and caprice, in which salvation was the issue and God's rather sultan-like and elusive factor was besought, scorned, despaired of, connived for, importuned. It was the paradoxical element in Catholic doctrine that lent this drama its suspense. The divine despot we courted could not be bought, like a piece of merchandise, by long hours at the prie-dieu, faithful attendance at the sacraments, obedience, reverence toward one's superiors. These solicitations helped, but it might well turn out that the worst girl in the school, whose pretty, haughty face wore rouge and a calm, closed look that advertised even to us younger ones some secret knowledge of men, was in the dark of her heart another Mary of Egypt, the strumpet saint in our midst. Such notions furnished a strange counterpoint to discipline; surely the Mother Superior never could have expelled a girl without recalling, with a shade of perplexity, the profligate youth of Saint Augustine and of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

This dark-horse doctrine of salvation, with all its worldly wisdom and riddling charm, was deep in the idiom of the convent. The merest lay sister could have sustained with spiritual poise

her end of a conversation on the purification through sin with Mr. Auden, Herr Kafka, or *Gospodin* Dostoyevsky; and Madame MacIllvra, while she would have held it bad taste to bow down, like Father Zossima, before the murder in Dmitri Karamazov's heart, would certainly have had him in for a series of long, interesting talks in her office.

Like all truly intellectual women, these were in spirit romantic desperadoes. They despised organizational heretics of the stamp of Luther and Calvin, but the great atheists and sinners were the heroes of the costume picture they taught as a subject called history. Marlowe, Baudelaire—above all, Byron—glowed like terrible stars above their literature course. Little girls of ten were reciting *The Prisoner of Chillon* and hearing stories of Claire Clairmont, Caroline Lamb, the Segatti, and the swim across the Hellespont. Even M. Voltaire enjoyed a left-handed popularity. The nuns spoke of him with horror and admiration mingled: "A great mind, an unconquerable spirit—and what fearful use they were put to." In Rousseau, an unbuttoned, middle-class figure, they had no interest whatever.

These infatuations, shared by the pupils, were brought into line with official Catholic opinion by a variety of stratagems. The more highly educated nuns were able to accept the damnation of these great Luciferian spirits. A simple young nun, on the other hand, who played baseball and taught arithmetic to the sixth and seventh grades used to tell her pupil that she personally was convinced that Lord Byron in his last hours must have made an act of contrition.

It was not therefore unusual that a line from the works of this dissipated author should have been waiting for us on the blackboard of the eighth-grade rhetoric classroom when we filed in that Wednesday morning which remains still memorable to me. "*Zoe mou, sas agapo*": the words of Byron's last assurance to the Maid of Athens stood there in Madame Barclay's French-looking script, speaking to us of the transiency of the passions. To me, as it happened, it spoke a twice-told tale. I had read the poem before, alone in my grandfather's library; indeed, I knew it by heart, and I rather resented the infringement on my private rights in it, the democratization of the poem which was about to take place. Soon, Madame Barclay's pointer was rapping from word to word: "My… life… I… love… you," she sharply translated. When the pointer started back for its second trip, I retreated into hauteur and began drawing a picture of the girl who sat next to me. Suddenly the pointer cracked across my writing tablet.

"You're just like Lord Byron, brilliant but unsound."

I heard the pointer being set down and the drawing being torn crisply twice across, but I could not look up. I had never felt so flattered in my life. Throughout the rest of the class, I sat motionless, simulating meekness, while my classmates shot me glances of wonder, awe, and congratulation, as though I had suddenly been struck by a remarkable disease, or been canonized, or transfigured. Madame Barclay's pronouncement, which I kept repeating to myself under my breath, had for us girls a kind of final and majestic certainty. She was the severest and most taciturn of our teachers. Her dark brows met in the middle; her skin was a pure olive; her upper lip had a faint mustache; she was the iron and authority of the convent. She tolerated no infractions, overlooked nothing, was utterly and obdurately fair, had no favorites; but her rather pointed face had the marks of suffering, as though her famous discipline had scored it as harshly as one of our papers. She had a bitter and sarcastic wit, and had studied, it was said, at the Sorbonne. Before this day, I had once or twice dared to say to myself that Madame Barclay liked me. Her dark, quite handsome eyes would sometimes move in my direction as her lips prepared an aphorism or a satiric gibe. Yet hardly had I estimated the look, weighed and measured it to store it away in my memory book of requited affections, when a stinging penalty would recall me from my dream and I could no longer be sure. Now, however, there was no doubt left. The reproof was a declaration of love as plain as the sentence on the blackboard which shimmered slightly before my eyes. My happiness was a confused exaltation in which the fact that I was Lord Byron and the fact

that I was loved by Madame Barclay, the most puzzling nun in the convent, blended in a Don Juanesque triumph.

In the refectory that noon, publicity was not wanting to enrich this moment. Insatiable, I could hardly wait for the weekend, to take Madame Barclay's words home as though they had been a prize. With the generosity of affluence, I spoke to myself of sharing this happiness, this honor, with my grandfather. Surely *this* would make up to him for any worry or difficulty I had caused him. At the same time, it would have the practical effect of explaining me a little to him. Phrases about my prototype rang in my head: "that unfortunate genius," "that turbulent soul," "that gifted and erratic nature."

My grandfather turned dark red when he heard the news. His forehead grew knotty with veins; he swore; he looked strange and young; it was the first time I had ever seen him angry. Argument and explanation were useless. For my grandfather, history had interposed no distance between Lord Byron and himself. Though the incestuous poet had died forty years before my grandfather was born, the romantic perspective was lacking. That insularity of my grandfather's that kept him intimate with morals and denied the reality of the exotic made him judge the poet as he judged himself or one of his neighbors—that is, on the merit of his actions. He was on the telephone at once, asking the Mother Superior in a thundering, courtroom voice what right one of her sisters had to associate his innocent granddaughter with that degenerate blackguard Byron. On Monday, Madame Barclay, with tight-drawn lips, told her class that she had a correction to make: Mary McCarthy did not resemble Lord Byron in any particular; she was neither brilliant, loose-living, nor unsound.

From Memories of a Catholic Girlhood. *Orphaned at age six and sent to Catholic school by her grandparents, McCarthy graduated from Vassar College in 1933 and later found work as a critic for* The Nation *and* The New Republic. *Encouraged to write fiction by the second of her four husbands, Edmund Wilson, she published her first novel,* The Company She Keeps, *in 1942.*

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403: Bethlehem

THE TRAINING OF A SOUL

Thus must a soul be trained which is to be a temple of God. It must learn to hear nothing and to say nothing save what pertains to the fear of the Lord. It must have no comprehension of foul words, no knowledge of worldly songs, and its childish tongue must be imbued with the sweet music of the psalms. Let boys with their wanton frolics be kept far from Paula: let even her maids and attendants hold aloof from association with the worldly, lest they render their evil knowledge worse by teaching it to her. Have a set of letters made for her, of boxwood or of ivory, and tell her their names. Let her play with them, making play a road to learning, and let her not only grasp the right order of the letters and remember their names in a simple song, but also frequently upset their order and mix the last letters with the middle ones, the middle with the first. Thus she will know them all by sight as well as by sound. When she begins with uncertain hand to use the pen, either let another hand be put over hers to guide her baby fingers, or else have the letters marked on the tablet so that her writing may follow their outlines and keep to their limits without straying away. Offer her prizes for spelling, tempting her with such trifling gifts as please young children. Let her have companions too in her lessons, so that she may seek to rival them and be stimulated by any praise they win. You must not scold her if she is somewhat slow; praise is the best sharpener of wits. Let her be glad when she is first and sorry when she falls behind. Above all take care not to make her lessons distasteful; a childish dislike often lasts longer than childhood. The very words from which she will get into the way of forming sentences should not be taken at haphazard but be definitely chosen and arranged on purpose. For example, let her have the names of the prophets and the apostles, and the whole list of patriarchs from Adam downward, as Matthew and Luke give it. She will then be doing two things at the same time, and will remember them afterward.

Things must not be despised as trifles, if without them great results are impossible. The very letters themselves, and so the first lesson in them, sound quite differently from the mouth of a learned man and of a rustic. And so you must take care not to let women's silly coaxing get your daughter into the way of cutting her words short or of disporting herself in gold brocade and fine purple. The first habit ruins talk, the second character; and children should never learn what they will afterward have to unlearn. The first impression made on a young mind is hard to remove. The shell-dyed wool—who can bring back its pristine whiteness? A new jar keeps for a long time the taste and smell of its original contents. Greek history tells us that the mighty King Alexander, who subdued the whole world, could not rid himself of the tricks of manner and gait which in his childhood he had caught from his governor Leonides. For it is easy to imitate the bad, and you may soon copy the faults of those to whose virtue you can never attain.

Her very dress and outward appearance should remind her of Him to whom she is promised. Do not pierce her ears, or paint with white lead and rouge the cheeks that are consecrated to Christ. Do not load her neck with pearls and gold, do not weigh down her head with jewels, do not dye her hair red and thereby presage for her the fires of hell. Let her have other pearls which she will sell hereafter and buy the pearl that is of great price.

Before Noah's flood the world was highly learned: by reason men lived a long time and so attained great experience and wisdom. Now, ere we begin rightly to come to the true knowledge of a thing, we lie down and die. God will not have it that we should attain a higher knowledge of things.

—Martin Luther, 1569

There was once a lady of rank named Praetextata who, at the bidding of her husband Hymetius, the uncle of Eustochia, altered that virgin's dress and appearance, and had her hair waved, desiring thus to overcome the virgin's resolution and her mother's wishes. But lo!—that same night in her dreams she saw an angel, terrible of aspect, standing before her, who threatened her with punishment and broke into speech thus, "Have you dared to put your husband's orders before those of Christ? Have you presumed to lay sacrilegious hands upon the head of God's virgin? Those hands this very hour shall wither and in torment you shall recognize your guilt, until at the fifth month's end you be carried off to hell. Moreover, if you persist in your wickedness, you shall lose both your husband and your children." All this was duly fulfilled, and a swift death marked the unhappy woman's late repentance. So it is that Christ takes vengeance upon the violators of his temple, so he defends his pearls and precious jewels. I have told you this, not with any wish to exult over the downfall of the wretched, but to remind you with what anxiety and carefulness you must watch over that which you have vowed to the Lord.

Jerome, *from his letters. Jerome dreamed in 375 that he was brought before a tribunal of the Lord and judged to be a Ciceronian and not a Christian. He vowed never to read pagan literature again. After spending a few years as an ascetic in the Syrian Desert, he wrote numerous biblical exegeses and in 382 became secretary to Pope Damasus in Rome.*

Burmese chart showing the path to nirvana and enlightenment, c. 1880.

c. 1926: Madrid

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS

I was twenty-two. I was studying at the School of Fine Arts in Madrid. The desire constantly, systematically, and at any cost to do just the opposite of what everybody else did pushed me to extravagances that soon became notorious in artistic circles. In the painting class we had the assignment to paint a Gothic statue of the Virgin directly from a model. Before going out the professor had repeatedly emphasized that we were to paint exactly what we "saw."

Immediately, in a dizzy frenzy of mystification, I went to work furtively painting, in the minutest detail, a pair of scales which I copied out of a catalogue. This time they really believed I was mad. At the end of the week the professor came to correct and comment on the progress of our work. He stopped in frozen silence before the picture of my scales while all the students gathered around us.

The Librarian, by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, 1566.

"Perhaps you see a Virgin like everyone else," I ventured, in a timid voice that was not without firmness. "But I see a pair of scales."

We were assigned to do an original picture in oil for a prize contest in the painting class. I made a wager that I would win the prize by painting a picture without touching my brush to the canvas. I did in fact execute it by tossing splashes of paint from a distance of a meter, and I succeeded in making a *pointilliste* picture so accurate in design and color that I was awarded the prize.

The following year I came up for my examination in the history of art. I was anxious to be as brilliant as possible. I was wonderfully well prepared. I got up on the platform where the examining committee of three sat and the subject of my oral thesis was drawn by lot. My luck was unbelievable: it was exactly the subject I should have preferred to treat. But suddenly an insurmountable feeling of indolence came over me, and almost without hesitation, to the stupefaction of my examiners and the people who filled the hall, I got up and declared in so many words, "I am very sorry, but I am infinitely more intelligent than these three professors, and I therefore refuse to be examined by them. I know this subject much too well."

As a result of this I was brought before the disciplinary council and expelled from the school. This was the end of my scholastic career.

Salvador Dalí, *from* The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí. *Having discovered Sigmund Freud's writings on the subconscious in the late 1920s, Dalí began to use the imagery produced by self-induced hallucinatory states as the inspiration for his paintings. A leading figure of the Surrealist movement, he worked with filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock to design the dream sequence for the 1945 psychological thriller* Spellbound.

1960: San Quentin

ELDRIDGE CLEAVER MEETS HIS GURU

A saint walked the earth in the person of one Chris Lovdjieff. He was a teacher at San Quentin and guru to all who came to him. What did he teach? Everything. It is easier just to say he taught Lovdjieff and let it go at that. He himself claimed to be sort of a disciple of Alan W. Watts, whom he used to bring over to Q to lecture us now and then in Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and on the ways the peoples of Asia view the universe. I never understood how "The Christ" (as I used to call Lovdjieff, to his great sorrow and pain) could sit at Watts' feet, because he always seemed to me more warm, more human, and possessed of greater wisdom than Watts displayed either in his lectures or his books. It may be that I received this impression from having been exposed more to Lovdjieff than to Watts. Yet there was something about Watts that reminded me of a slick advertisement for a labor-saving device, aimed at the American housewife, out of the center page of *Life* magazine; while Lovdjieff's central quality seemed to be pain, suffering, and a peculiar strength based on his understanding of his own helplessness, weakness, and need. Under Lovdjieff I studied world history, Oriental philosophy, Occidental philosophy, comparative religion, and economics. I could not tell one class from the other—neither could the other students and neither, I believe, could Lovdjieff. It was all Lovdjieff.

When you came to Lovdjieff's classes, you came to learn. If you betrayed other motives, "Get out of here this minute!"—without malice but without equivocation. He was a magnet, an institution. He worked indefatigably. His day started when the school bell rang at 8:00 A.M. Often he would forgo lunch to interview a few students and help them along with their schoolwork or personal problems. He never ceased complaining because the officials refused to allow him to eat lunch in the mess hall with the prisoners. Had they given him a cell he would have taken it. After lunch, he'd teach until 3:00 P.M. When night school convened at 6:00 P.M., The Christ would be there—beaming, radiating—and he'd teach passionately until 10:00 P.M. Then reluctantly he'd go home to suffer in exile until school opened next day. On Saturdays he'd be there bright and early to teach—Lovdjieff. He would have come on Sundays too, only the officials put their foot down and refused to hear of it. The Christ settled for a Sunday evening radio program of two hours which he taped for broadcast to the prisoners.

> *For what earth, air, fire, and water are to animate nature, freedom is to learning. A mind unfree, a mind possessed, dragooned, or indoctrinated, does not learn. It copies. Learning implies discovery. The unfree mind looks at maps but does not travel. It dares not. For at the edge of the maps is the jumping-off place, full of dragons and sea serpents. The unfree mind stays home, locks the door, bars the shutters. It is a hero in a crowd, a coward in solitude; it is a slave and a sloth.*
>
> *—Alfred Whitney Griswold, 1954*

His classes were works of art. He made ancient history contemporary by evoking the total environment—intellectual, social, political, economic—of an era. He breathed life into the shattered ruins of the past. Students sat entranced while The Christ performed, his silver-rimmed glasses reflecting the light in eye-twinkling flashes.

He dressed like a college boy, betraying a penchant for simple sweaters and plain slacks of no particular distinction. He burned incense in his classroom when he lectured on religion to evoke a certain mood. He was drawn to those students who seemed most impossible to teach—old men who had been illiterate all their lives and set in their ways. Lovdjieff didn't believe that anyone or anything in the universe was "set in its ways." Those students who were intelligent and quickest to learn he seemed reluctant to bother with, almost as if to say, pointing at the illiterates and speaking to the bright ones, "Go away. Leave me.

You don't need me. These others do."

Jesus wept. Lovdjieff would weep over a tragic event that had taken place ten thousand years ago in some forgotten byway in the Fertile Crescent. Once he was lecturing on the ancient Hebrews. He was angry with them for choosing to settle along the trade routes between Egypt and Mesopotamia. He showed how, over the

The Founding Fathers in their wisdom decided that children were an unnatural strain on parents. So they provided jails called schools, equipped with tortures called an education. School is where you go between when your parents can't take you and industry can't take you.

—John Updike, 1963

centuries time and time again, these people had been invaded, slaughtered, driven out, captured, but always to return.

"What is it that keeps pulling them back to this spot!" he exclaimed. He lost his breath. His face crumpled, and he broke down and wept. "Why do they insist on living in the middle of that—that (for once, I thought meanly, The Christ couldn't find a word)—that—freeway! They have to sit down in the center of the freeway! That's all it is—look!" He pointed out the trade routes on the map behind his desk, then he sat down and cried uncontrollably for several minutes.

Another time, he brought tape-recorded selections from Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel*. The Christ wept all through the tape.

The Christ would weep over a line of poetry; over a single image in a poem; over the beauty of a poem's music; over the fact that man can talk, read, write, walk, reproduce, die, eat, eliminate—over the fact that a chicken can lay an egg.

Once he lectured us all week on love. He quoted what poets had said of love, what novelists had said of love, what playwrights had said of love. He played tapes of Ashley Montagu on love. Over the weekend, each student was to write an essay on his own conception of love, mindful to have been influenced by what he had been listening to all week long. In my essay I explained that I did not love white people. I quoted Malcolm X:

> How can I love the man who raped my mother, killed my father, enslaved my ancestors, dropped atomic bombs on Japan, killed off the Indians, and keeps me cooped up in the slums? I'd rather be tied up in a sack and tossed into the Harlem River first.

Lovdjieff refused to grade my paper. He returned it to me. I protested that he was being narrow-minded and dogmatic in not understanding why I did not love white people simply because he himself was white. He told me to talk with him after class.

"How can you do this to me?" he asked.

"I've only written the way I feel," I said.

Instead of answering, he cried.

"Jesus wept," I told him and walked out.

Two days later, he returned my essay—ungraded. There were instead spots on it which I realized to be his tears.

Although Lovdjieff's popularity among the prisoners continued to soar and the waiting lists for his classes grew longer and longer, prison authorities banned his radio program. Then they stopped him from coming in on Saturdays. Then they stopped him from teaching night school. Then they took away his pass and barred him from San Quentin.

I must say that this man has not been adequately described. Certain things I hold back on purpose, others I don't know how to say. Until I began writing this, I did not know that I had a vivid memory of him. But now I can close my eyes and relive many scenes in which he goes into his act.

From Soul on Ice. *Convicted of assault with intent to murder at the age of twenty-seven, Cleaver spent eight years in prison before an essay that he published in* Ramparts *magazine helped win him parole in 1966. Soon after his release, he met Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, founders of the Black Panther Party, and became their minister of information.*

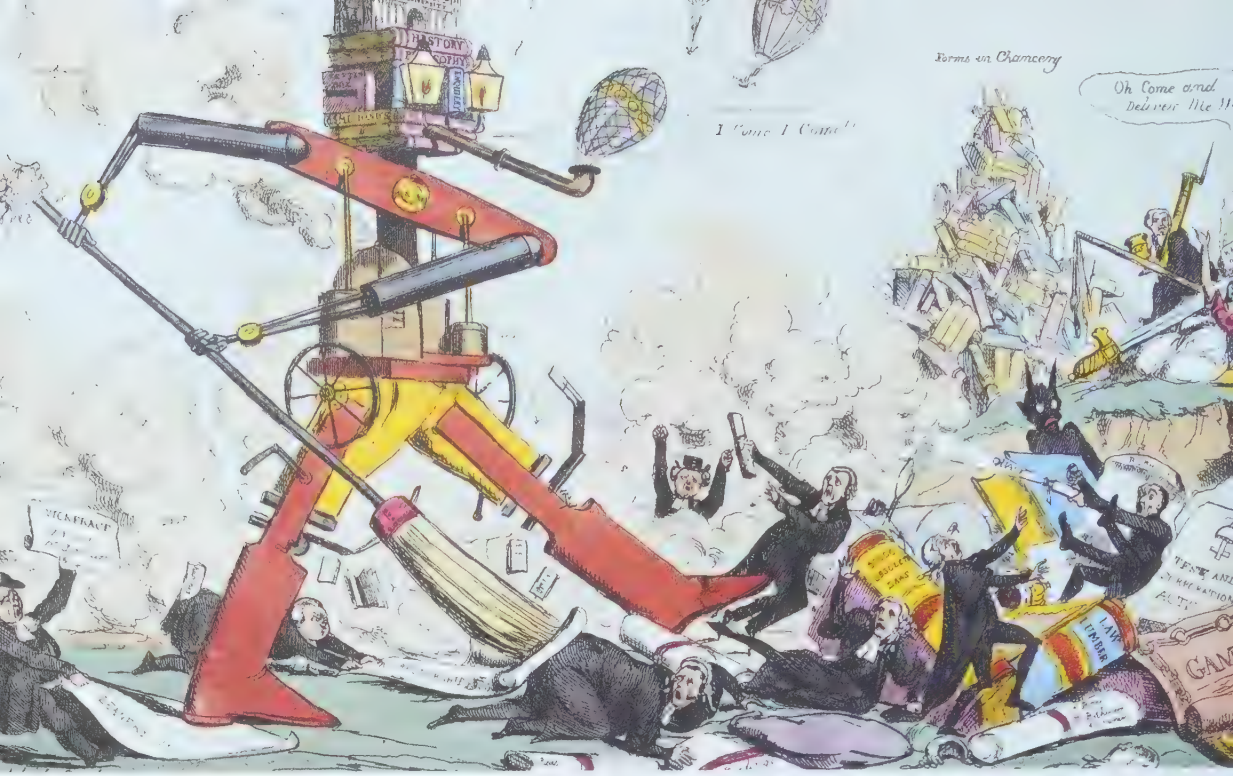
Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels (center, arms folded) visiting a National Socialist school, 1942.

423 BC: Athens

ARISTOPHANES ENTERS THE CULTURE WARS

Right

I'll tell you about the way boys were brought up in the old days—the days when I was all the rage and it was actually fashionable to be decent. First of all, children were supposed to be seen and not heard—not a sound. Then, all the boys of the district were expected to walk together through the streets to their music master's quietly, with decorum, and without cloaks, even if it was snowing confetti—and they did. And when they got there he would make them learn some of the old songs by heart—like "Pallas, Great Sacker of Cities" or "Let the Glad Strain Sound Afar"—singing them to the traditional tunes their fathers handed down, and on *no* account pressing their thighs together. And if any of them did anything disreputable, tying up the melody in knots with changes of mode and rhythm—why, he was given a sound thrashing for insulting the Muses. Then in the gymnasium, when they sat down they were expected to keep their legs well up, so as not to—so as not to torment us with desire; and when they got up, they had to smooth down the sand, so as not to leave any marks on it for their admirers to feast their eyes on. What's more, [*sternly*] they never oiled themselves below the belt, [*dreamily*] and their privates looked like peaches, all velvety and dewy; and you wouldn't see a boy being his own pimp, walking along making eyes at his lovers and putting on a soft tender voice, oh no! They weren't allowed to take so much as a radish head at dinner, or any of the dill or celery if their elders wanted it; they never ate posh fish, they never giggled, they never stood with their legs crossed—



The March of Intellect, a juggernaut figure with London University on its head, sweeping away and kicking lawyers, vicars, and quack doctors, by Robert Seymour, c. 1828.

Wrong

[*mockingly*] How thoroughly quaint! How redolent of cicada brooches, ox-slaughter trials, and Cedeides!

Right

Be that as it may, that's the sort of discipline that I used to rear the men who fought at Marathon. What does *your* kind do for our young men? You teach them to wrap themselves in cloaks up to the eyebrows. And when I saw one of them dancing at the Panathenaea, and he let his shield drop to his haunches, why, I nearly choked—the insult to our beloved goddess! [*to Pheidippides*] So choose Right, my lad, choose me, and have no fear. Keep away from the market square, and the public baths too. If ever you do something shameful, show you're ashamed. If someone makes fun of you, flare up. If you're sitting down and an older person approaches, stand up. Don't show disrespect for your parents, or do anything disgraceful that would defile the face of modesty. Don't run after dancing girls; you never know what may happen—suppose some little whore chucks an apple at you as a come-and-get-me? Your reputation's gone in an instant. Don't ever contradict your father or call him an antediluvian; of course he's older than you, that's how he was able to bring you up before you could fly on your own, so you shouldn't insult him with it.

Wrong

Don't listen to him, lad—otherwise, by Dionysus, you'll end up just like the sons of Hippocrates and be called a boring little baby.

Right

What matters is that you'll be spending your time in the gymnasium, getting sleek and healthy, not like these people who are always chattering away in the market square about some abstruse topic or other, or being dragged into court over some piffling, quibbling, filthy little dispute. No, you'll go down to Academe's Park and take a training run under the sacred olive trees, a wreath of white reeds on your head, with a nice decent companion of your own age; in autumn you'll share the fragrance of leafy poplar and carefree convolvulus, and

you'll take delight in the spring when the plane tree whispers to the elm!

Leader [*to Wrong*]
It looks as though you'll need the
newest weapons of your school
In order to defeat your foe and not face
ridicule.

Wrong
As a matter of fact, right through his speech I've been positively bursting with eagerness to refute it and smash it to smithereens. That's why the people at the Thinkery call me Wrong: I was the one who invented ways of proving anything wrong—established laws, soundly based accusations, you name it. Isn't that worth millions—to be able to have a really bad case and yet win? Well, let's have a look at this educational system he's so proud of. He says, for example, [*turning to Pheidippides*] that he won't let you have any hot baths. [*to Right*] On what principle do you object to them?

Right
Hot baths are *bad*. They make a man a coward.

Wrong
Hold it! I've scored one there, right away, and there's no way you can wriggle out of it. Tell me, of the sons of Zeus, who would you say was the bravest man and performed the greatest number of labors?

Right
The best of them was unquestionably Heracles.

Wrong
And have you ever heard of Heracles having a *cold* bath? [*Right is speechless*] Well, was he the bravest of them all, or wasn't he?

Right [*spluttering*]
That—that—that's just the sort of clever stuff that you hear the young lads coming out with all day! So they flock to the public baths and leave the wrestling schools empty.

Wrong
Then you object to their hanging around the market square. I see nothing wrong with it at all; quite the contrary. If it was such a bad thing, Homer would never have described all his sages, such as Nestor, as "marketeers." To consider next the tongue. He says it's bad for the young to exercise it too much; well, I say it's good. And then he talks about modesty or decency or something—another pernicious evil! Come on, prove me wrong: tell me of anyone who's been done any good by being modest and decent.

Right
Many people. For example, that was how Peleus came to be given a knife.

Wrong
A knife! Well, well! What a rich haul, I must say! Even Hyperholus from the lamp market—now *he's* made a mint by being wicked, but he never got a knife!

Right
And it was also because of Peleus' virtue that he got Thetis as his wife.

Wrong
Yes, and that was why she deserted him as well. If he'd been a little less virtuous he might have been a more satisfactory performer under the covers. Women do *like* some disrespectful handling in bed, you know, you hulking old ruin! [*to Pheidippides*] Listen to all the things that virtue can't do for you, my lad—all the pleasures you won't be able to have. No boys. No women. No gambling. No fancy food. No booze. No belly laughs. Will your life be worth living, without all these? [*Pheidippides indicates the answer is no*] I thought not. Let me turn now to—to the demands of nature. Let us say you've fallen in love with a married woman—had a bit of an affair—and then got caught in the act. As you are now, without arguing skills, you're done for. But if you come and learn from me, then you can do what you like and get away with it—indulge your desires, laugh and play,

have no shame. And then suppose you do get caught with somebody's wife, you can say to him straight out, "I've done nothing wrong. Just look at Zeus; isn't he always a slave to erotic desire? And do you expect a mere mortal like me to be stronger than a god?"

Right
And suppose your advice doesn't work? Suppose he gets radish-buggered and ash-plucked? Then he'll have the asshole of a faggot for the rest of his life. Argue yourself out of *that* one!

Wrong
So if he does have the asshole of a faggot, what's wrong with that?

Right
You mean, what could be *worse* than that?

Wrong
From what class of persons are prosecution advocates drawn?

Right
From the faggots.

Wrong
I agree with you. And our actors—I mean, of course, the tragic ones?

Right
From the faggots.

Wrong
Right again. And from what class do we get our politicians?

Right
From the faggots.

Wrong
Then don't you see you were talking nonsense? Why, look at the audience; what do you think most of *them* are?

Right
I'm looking.

Wrong
And what do you see?

Right
Good gods, the faggots have it by a street! At least, I know *he's* one [*pointing*], and him, and him there with the long hair—

Wrong
Well then?

Right
You win. Here, you sods out there, in the name of the gods, take my cloak—I'm defecting! [*he throws his cloak toward the right-hand side of the audience in the direction of some of the men he has previously pointed out—to reveal that he is wearing underneath it an inner garment of distinctly feminine color and line; he then runs into the auditorium and up a gangway on the left-hand side—pausing to dally flirtatiously with the odd spectator—and eventually vanishes from view at the rear*]

Wrong [*to Strepsiades*]
Well, now, which do you want? Are you going to take your son away, or do you want me to teach him to be an orator?

Strepsiades
Oh, teach him—don't spare the rod, if necessary—and be sure to give his teeth a good cutting edge. He should be able to handle small cases with one side of his mouth while using the other side for the bigger ones.

Wrong
Don't worry; when you get him back, he'll be a top-class sophist.

Pheidippides [*aside*]
A pale-faced wretch, more like, if you ask me.

From The Clouds. *Performed two years before the Peace of Nicias ended the first part of the Peloponnesian War,* The Clouds *attacks Socrates, who, as the operator of the Thinkery, can teach anyone with disposable income how to make the wrong argument sound right.*

c. 1918: Brookfield

JAMES HILTON GIVES THE CONTEXT

And once, on a night of full moonlight, the air-raid warning was given while Chips was taking his lower fourth in Latin. The guns began almost instantly, and as there was plenty of shrapnel falling about outside, it seemed to Chips that they might just as well stay where they were, on the ground floor of School House. It was pretty solidly built and made as good a dugout as Brookfield could offer; and as for a direct hit, well, they could not expect to survive that, wherever they were.

So he went on with his Latin, speaking a little louder amid the reverberating crashes of the guns and the shrill whine of antiaircraft shells. Some of the boys were nervous; few were able to be attentive. He said gently, "It may possibly seem to you, Robertson—at this particular moment in the world's history—umph—that the affairs of Caesar in Gaul some two thousand years ago—are—umph—of somewhat secondary importance—and that—umph—the irregular conjugation of the verb *tollo* is—umph—even less important still. But believe me—umph—my dear Robertson—that is not really the case." Just then there came a particularly loud explosion—quite near. "You cannot—umph—judge the importance of things—umph—by the noise they make. Oh dear me, no." A little chuckle. "And these things—umph—that have mattered—for thousands of years—are not going to be—snuffed out—because some stink merchant—in his laboratory—invents a new kind of mischief." Titters of nervous laughter; for Buffles, the pale, lean, and medically unfit science master, was nicknamed the stink merchant. Another explosion—nearer still. "Let us—um—resume our work. If it is fate that we are soon to be—umph—interrupted, let us be found employing ourselves in something—umph—really appropriate. Is there anyone who will volunteer to construe?"

Maynard, chubby, dauntless, clever, and impudent, said, "I will, sir."

"Very good. Turn to page forty and begin at the bottom line."

The explosions still continued deafeningly; the whole building shook as if it were being lifted off its foundations. Maynard found the page, which was some way ahead, and began shrilly, "*Genus hoc erat pugnae*—this was the kind of fight—*quo se Germani exercuerant*—in which the Germans busied themselves. Oh, sir, that's good—that's really very funny indeed, sir—one of your very best." Laughing began, and Chips added, "Well—umph—you can see—now—that these dead languages—umph—can come to life again—sometimes—eh? Eh?"

Afterward they learned that five bombs had fallen in and around Brookfield, the nearest of them just outside the school grounds. Nine persons had been killed.

The story was told, retold, embellished. "The dear old boy never turned a hair. Even found some old tag to illustrate what was going on. Something in Caesar about the way the Germans fought. You wouldn't think there were things like that in Caesar, would you? And the way Chips laughed... you know the way he *does* laugh... the tears all running down his face... never seen him laugh so much...."

November 11, 1918.

News came through in the morning; a whole holiday was decreed for the school, and the kitchen staff were implored to provide as cheerful a spread as wartime rationing permitted. There was much cheering and singing, and a bread fight across the dining hall. When Chips entered in the midst of the uproar there was an instant hush, and then wave upon wave of cheering; everyone gazed on him with eager, shining eyes, as on a symbol of victory. He walked to the dais, seeming as if he wished to speak; they made silence for him, but he shook his head after a moment, smiled, and walked away again.

From Good-bye, Mr. Chips. *Hilton published his first novel,* Catherine Herself, *before graduating from Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1921. He coined the term "Shangri-La" in* Lost Horizon, *published in 1933, and, after moving to Hollywood in the late 1930s, won an Oscar for his screenplay for* Mrs. Miniver.

c. 105: Rome

SOFT WAX AND STINKING LAMPBLACK

Professorial chairs too often prove barren comfort,
Bring banishment or death. Cases abound: the wretch
Who hanged himself, or that other penniless exile to whom
Athens dared give nothing but the cup of cold hemlock.
Gods, grant the earth lie easy and light on our fathers' shades,
With crocus bloom: may their ashes enjoy eternal springtime,
Who held that the teacher stood in a parent's place,
And must be revered as such! Achilles, approaching manhood,
Still feared the rod, was still having singing lessons
In his native mountains, would never have dared to laugh
At the music master's tail. But pupils nowadays
Will sometimes beat up their instructor—it happened to Rufus,
That professor they nicknamed "Cicero of the Rhône."
  What schoolmaster, even the most successful, commands
A proper return for his labors? Yet even this little,
However trifling—and any professor makes more—
Is further whittled away when the pupil's unfeeling
Attendant, and the cashier, have each taken their cut.
Better give in, then: bargain, be beaten down
For a lower fee, like a hawker peddling blankets
And winter rugs—so long as you get *some* recompense
For presiding, before it's light, in a hellhole any blacksmith
Or wool carder would refuse to train apprentices in;
So long as you get *some* return for enduring the stink
Of all those guttering lanterns—one to each pupil,

So that every Virgil and Horace is grimed with lampblack
From cover to cover. Yet, nine times out of ten,
You need a court order to get even this small pittance.
In return, what's more, such parents demand quite impossible
Standards from any master: his grammar must be above cavil,
History, literature, he must have all the authorities
Pat at his fingertips. They'll waylay him en route
For the public baths, and expect him to answer their questions
Straight off the cuff—who was Anchises' nurse, what
Was the name of Anchemolus' stepmother, and where
Did she come from? How old was Acestes when he died?
How many jars of Sicilian wine did the Trojans
Get from him as a present? They demand that the teacher
Shall mold these tender minds, like an artist who shapes
A face out of wax, with his thumb. He must, they insist,
Be a father to all his pupils, must stop them getting up to
Indecent tricks with each other (though it's no sinecure
To keep check over all those darting eyes—and fingers).
"See to it," you're told, "and when the school year's ended,
You'll get as much as a jockey makes from a single race."

Juvenal, *from the* Satires. *Disgusted by the cronyism of emperor Domitian and disenchanted by his own inability to obtain a military promotion, Juvenal wrote a satire of court favoritism in the 80s and was rewarded with banishment to Egypt. His* Satires *served as inspiration for Tertullian, Giovanni Boccaccio, and Lord Byron.*

1955: Minnesota

DON DELILLO LEARNS TO LOVE THE GROMMET

I went to see Father in his office later in the day. It was a three-hundred-yard walk through a billowing white storm. I had the edges of my watch cap unfurled over my ears and kept my forearm raised against the cutting sleet, against the whole hard physical thing, the snowstorms and open spaces, the reality of a mass of land called North America, new to my experience.

Father started talking before I had my jacket off.

Education has become a prisoner of contemporaneity. It is the past, not the dizzy present, that is the best door to the future.

—Camille Paglia, 1992

"It's when the hair in my nostrils begins going stiff. That's when I want to retire to the South of France. Sit down, Shay, and tell me how you're doing. A young man's progress. That's the title of this session."

"I borrowed a pair of boots."

He liked that response.

"Do they fit?"

"No."

Even better. When he asked about the state of my mind and soul, which he did only rarely, and when I answered on a practical plane, as I always did, he seemed to think I was devising a down-to-earth reply out of some manly instinct when in fact I was only confused, forever trying to put together a suitable set of words.

"What are you reading?"

I recited a list.

"You understand what's in those books?"

"No," I said.

Again he smiled. I think he was tired of gifted kids. He'd done work with boys of advanced standing and now he wanted to talk to misfits of the other kind, the ones who'd made trouble for themselves and others.

"Some of it maybe. What I don't understand, I memorize."

His arm was propped on the desk and he leaned his head into the canted hand. No smile this time.

"That's not why we started this place, is it?"

"I study like a madman, Father."

"But you can't memorize ideas the way you do the endings of Latin verbs."

His hands were unspotted and small. Some of the other Jebbies wore flannel shirts and heavy sweaters but Father Paulus was not influenced by climate or geography or the sense of special freedoms at Voyageur. He went black-suited and Roman-collared and I respected this and found it reassuring.

"One of the things we want to do here is to produce serious men. What sort of phenomenon is this? Not so easy to say. Someone, in the end, who develops a certain depth, a spacious quality, say, that's a form of respect for other ways of thinking and believing. Let us unnarrow the basic human tubing. And let us help a young man toward an ethical strength that makes him decisive, that shows him precisely who he is, Shay, and how he is meant to address the world."

You were always afraid of disappointing Father, being unequal to the level of discourse. Being bland when he wanted a more spirited sort of traffic, even a bullshit act, wiseass and slouchy. Bland and plodding when he wanted independence and open argument.

"Have you come across the word velleity? A nice Thomistic ring to it. Volition at its lowest ebb. A small thing, a wish, a tendency. If you're low-willed, you see, you end up living in the shallowest turns and bends of your own preoccupations. Are we getting anywhere?"

His office was in an old barracks building and the force of the wind made the beams shift and crick.

"Aquinas said only intense actions will strengthen a habit. Not mere repetition. Intensity makes for moral accomplishment. An intense and persevering will. This is an element of seriousness. Constancy. This is an element. A

sense of purpose. A self-chosen goal. Tell me I'm babbling. I'll respect you for it."

We were about thirty miles below the Canadian border in a rambling encampment that was mostly barracks and other frame structures: a harking back, maybe, to the missionary roots of the order—except the natives, in this case, were us. Poor city kids who showed promise; some frail-bodied types with photographic memories and a certain uncleanness about them; those who were bright but unstable; those who could not adjust; the ones whose adjustment was ordained by the state; a cluster of Latins from some Jesuit center in Venezuela, smart young men with a cosmopolitan style, freezing their weenies off; and a few farm boys from not so far away, shyer than borrowed suits.

"Sometimes I think the education we dispense is better suited to a fifty year old who feels he missed the point the first time around. Too many abstract ideas. Eternal verities left and right. You'd be better served looking at your shoe and naming the parts. You in particular, Shay, coming from the place you come from."

This seemed to animate him. He leaned across the desk and gazed, is the word, at my wet boots.

"Those are ugly things, aren't they?"

"Yes they are."

"Name the parts. Go ahead. We're not so chichi here, we're not so intellectually chic that we can't test a student face to face."

"Name the parts," I said. "All right. Laces."

"Laces. One to each shoe. Proceed."

I lifted one foot and turned it awkwardly.

"Sole and heel."

"Yes, go on."

I set my foot back down and stared at the boot, which seemed about as blank as a closed brown box.

"Proceed, boy."

"There's not much to name, is there? A front and a top."

"A front and a top. You make me want to weep."

"The rounded part at the front."

"You're so eloquent I may have to pause to regain my composure. You've named the lace. What's the flap under the lace?"

"The tongue."

"Well?"

"I knew the name. I just didn't see the thing."

He made a show of draping himself across the desk, writhing slightly as if in the midst of some dire distress.

"You didn't see the thing because you don't know how to look. And you don't know how to look because you don't know the names."

He tilted his chin in high rebuke, mostly theatrical, and withdrew his body from the surface of the desk, dropping his bottom into the swivel chair and looking at me again and then doing a decisive quarter turn and raising his right leg sufficiently so that the foot, the shoe, was posted upright at the edge of the desk.

> *A fool's brain digests philosophy into folly, science into superstition, and art into pedantry. Hence university education.*
>
> *—George Bernard Shaw, 1903*

A plain black everyday clerical shoe.

"Okay," he said. "We know about the sole and heel."

"Yes."

"And we've identified the tongue and lace."

"Yes," I said.

With his finger he traced a strip of leather that went across the top edge of the shoe and dipped down under the lace.

"What is it?" I said.

"You tell me. What is it?"

"I don't know."

"It's the cuff."

"The cuff."

"The cuff. And this stiff section over the heel. That's the counter."

"That's the counter."

"And this piece amidships between the cuff and the strip above the sole. That's the quarter."

"The quarter," I said.

"And the strip above the sole. That's the welt. Say it, boy."

"The welt."

"How everyday things lie hidden. Because we don't know what they're called. What's the frontal area that covers the instep?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know. It's called the vamp."

"The vamp."

"Say it."

"The vamp. The frontal area that covers the instep. I thought I wasn't supposed to memorize."

"Don't memorize ideas. And don't take us too seriously when we turn up our noses at rote learning. Rote helps build the man. You stick the lace through the what?"

"This I should know."

"Of course you know. The perforations at either side of and above the tongue."

"I can't think of the word. Eyelet."

"Maybe I'll let you live after all."

"The eyelets."

"Yes. And the metal sheath at each end of the lace."

He flicked the thing with his middle finger.

"This I don't know in a million years."

"The aglet."

"Not in a million years."

"The tag or aglet."

"The aglet," I said.

"And the little metal ring that reinforces the rim of the eyelet through which the aglet passes. We're doing the physics of language, Shay."

"The little ring."

"You see it?"

"Yes."

"This is the grommet," he said.

"Oh man."

"The grommet. Learn it, know it, and love it."

"I'm going out of my mind."

"This is the final arcane knowledge. And when I take my shoe to the shoemaker and he places it on a form to make repairs—a block shaped like a foot. This is called a what?"

"I don't know."

"A last."

"My head is breaking apart."

"Everyday things represent the most overlooked knowledge. These names are vital to your progress. Quotidian things. If they weren't important, we wouldn't use such a gorgeous Latinate word. Say it," he said.

"Quotidian."

"An extraordinary word that suggests the depth and reach of the commonplace."

His white collar hung loose below his Adam's apple and the skin at his throat was going slack and ropy and it seemed to be catching him unprepared, old age, coming late but fast.

I put on my jacket.

"I meant to bring along a book for you," he said.

His hands were still young, though, a soft chalky baby blush. There was a chessboard on a table in a corner, opposing pieces marshaled.

"Come to Upper Red tomorrow and I'll dig it out for you."

Upper Red was the faculty residence. They named the buildings at Voyageur after local landmarks—lakes, towns, rivers, forests. Not after saints, theologians, or Jesuit martyrs. The Jesuits, according to Paulus, had been treated so brusquely in so many places for their attempts to convert and transform—decapitated in Japan, disemboweled in the Horn of Africa, eaten alive in North America, crucified in Siam, drawn and quartered in England, thrown into the ocean off Madagascar—that the founders of our little experimental college thought they'd spare the landscape some of the bloodier emblems of the order's history.

"By the bye, Shay."

"Yes," I said.

"Did I see you in that little group yesterday signing a petition in support of Senator McCarthy?"

"I was there, yes, Father."

"Signing a petition."

"It seemed okay," I said.

He nodded, looking past me.

"Do you know why the Senate condemned him?"

"The others were signing," I said. "Some

of the South Americans," I said a little desperately, knowing how stupid this sounded but thinking, somehow, this was the way to exonerate myself.

"So you signed. The others were shitting, Father. So I shat."

He looked past me, nodding reasonably, and I turned and left.

I walked back and forth across the parade in the blowing snow. Then I went to my room and threw off my jacket. I wanted to look up words. I took off my boots and wrung out my cap over the washbasin. I wanted to look up words. I wanted to look up velleity and quotidian and memorize the fuckers for all time, spell them, learn them, pronounce them syllable by syllable—vocalize, phonate, utter the sounds, say the words for all they're worth.

This is the only way in the world you can escape the things that made you.

From Underworld. *After quitting his copywriting job at an advertising agency in New York City, DeLillo in 1971 published his first novel,* Americana. *A leading figure of American literary postmodernism, DeLillo published* White Noise *in 1985 and* Libra *in 1988, notable for their elliptical prose.*

The Rosetta Stone, the key to deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs, c. 196 BC.

1916: Nova Scotia

BLUE CRAYON AND BLESSED INK

Every time I see long columns of numbers handwritten in a certain way, a strange sensation or shudder, partly aesthetic, partly painful, goes through my diaphragm. It is like seeing the dorsal fin of a large fish suddenly cut through the surface of the water—not a frightening fish like a shark, more like a sailfish. The numbers have to be only up to but under a hundred, rather large and clumsily written, and

We must not believe the many who say that only free people ought to be educated, but we should rather believe the philosophers who say that only the educated are free.

—Epictetus, c. 135

the columns squeezed together, with long, vertical lines between them drawn by hand, long and crooked. They are usually in pencil, these numbers that affect me so, but I've seen them in blue crayon or blurred ink, and they produce the same effect. One morning our newspaper delivery man, an old Italian named Tony, whom I'd seen over and over again, threw back the pages of his limp, black, oilcloth-covered account book to my page, and there, up and down, at right angles to the pages' blue lines, he had kept track of my newspapers in pencil, in columns of ones and ones, twos and threes. My diaphragm contracted and froze. Or Faustina, the old, black lottery-ticket seller, and *her* limp school notebook with a penciled-off half-inch column waveringly drawn for each customer. Or my glimpse of a barkeeper's apparently homemade, home-stitched pad, as he consulted long, thin numbers referring to heaven knows what (how many drinks each of his customers had had?), and then put the pad away again, under the bar.

The real name of this sensation is memory. It is a memory I do not even have to try to remember, or reconstruct; it is always right there, clear and complete. The mysterious numbers, the columns that impressed me so much—a mystery I never solved when I went to primer class in Nova Scotia!

Primer class was a sort of Canadian equivalent of kindergarten; it was the year you went to school before you went to first grade. But we didn't sit about sociably and build things, or crayon, or play, or quarrel. We sat one behind the other in a line of small, bolted-down desks and chairs, in the same room with grades one, two, three, and four. We were at the left facing the teacher, and I think there were seven or eight of us. We were taught reading and writing and arithmetic, or enough of them to prepare us for the first grade—also, how to behave in school. This meant to sit up straight, not to scrape your feet on the floor, never to whisper, to raise your hand when you had to go out, and to stand up when you were asked a question. We used slates; only the real grades could buy scribblers: beautiful, fat writing pads with colored pictures of horses and kittens on the covers, and pale tan paper with blue lines. They could also go up front to sharpen their pencils into the wastebasket.

I was five. My grandmother had already taught me to write on a slate my name and my family's names and the names of the dog and the two cats. Earlier she had taught me my letters, and at first I could not get past the letter "G," which for some time I felt was far enough to go. *My* alphabet made a satisfying short song, and I didn't want to spoil it. Then a visitor called on my grandmother and asked me if I knew my letters. I said I did and, accenting the rhythm, gave him my version. He teased me so about stopping at "G" that I was finally convinced one must go on with the other nineteen letters. Once past "G," it was plain sailing. By the time school started, I could read almost all my primer, printed in both handwriting and type, and I loved every word. First, as a frontispiece, it had the flag in full color, with ONE FLAG, ONE KING, ONE CROWN under it. I colored in the black-and-white illustrations that looked old-fashioned, even to me, using most-

Living Wage

Monthly salary for teachers per pupil in Rome c. 301

Elementary school: 50 denarii

Arithmetic or shorthand: 75 denarii

Greek or Latin literature and geometry: 200 denarii

Rhetoric and public speaking: 250 denarii

Monthly mean salaries for teachers in New York State c. 2007

Graduate school (teaching assistant): 2,548 dollars

Elementary school: 5,208 dollars

Speech therapy: 5,572 dollars

Physics (postsecondary): 7,580 dollars

ly red and green crayons. On the end pages I had tried to copy the round cancellation marks from old envelopes: BROOKLYN, NY, SEPT. 1914; HALIFAX, AUG. 1916, and so on, but they had not turned out well—a set of lopsided, crumbling wheels.

The summer before school began was the summer of numbers, chiefly number eight. I learned their shapes from the kitchen calendar and the clock in the sitting room, though I couldn't yet tell time. Four and five were hard enough, but I think I was in love with eight. One began writing it just to the right of the top, and drew an "S" downwards. This wasn't too difficult, but the hardest part was to hit the bottom line (ruled on the slate by my grandmother) and come up again, against the grain; that is, against the desire of one's painfully cramped fingers, and at the same time not make it a straight line, but a sort of upside down and backwards "S," and all this in *curves*. Eights also made the worst noise on the slate. My grandmother would send me outside to practice, sitting on the back steps. The skreeking was slow and awful.

The slate pencils came two for a penny, with thin white paper, diagonally striped in pale blue or red, glued around them except for an inch left bare at one end. I loved the slate and the pencils almost as much as the primer. What I liked best about the slate was washing it off at the kitchen sink, or in the watering trough, and then watching it dry. It dried like clouds, and then the very last wet streak would grow tinier and tinier, and thinner and thinner; then suddenly it was gone and the slate was pale gray again and dry, dry, dry.

My initial experiences of formal education were on the whole pleasurable. Reading and writing caused me no suffering. I found the first easier, but the second was enjoyable—I mean *artistically* enjoyable—and I came to admire my own handwriting in pencil, when I got to that stage, perhaps as a youthful Chinese student might admire his own brushstrokes. It was wonderful to see that the letters each had different expressions, and that the same letter had different expressions at different times. Sometimes the two capitals of my name looked miserable, slumped down and sulky, but at others they turned fat and cheerful, almost with roses in their cheeks. I also had the first grade to look forward to, as well as geography, the maps, and longer and much better stories. The one subject that baffled me was arithmetic. I knew all the numbers of course, and liked to write them—I finally mastered the eight—but when I watched the older grades at arithmetic class, in front of the blackboard with their columns of figures, it was utterly incomprehensible. Those mysterious numbers!

Elizabeth Bishop, *from "Primer Class." Bishop founded an experimental literary magazine with, among others, Mary McCarthy at Vassar College in the 1930s. In 1934 she met Marianne Moore who convinced the younger poet to abandon her aspirations to attend medical school. A New Englander by birth, Bishop lived in Florida and Mexico before publishing in 1946 her first book of poems,* North & South.

c. 1745: St. Petersburg

PHILOSOPHER EMPRESS

The Grand Duke appeared to rejoice at the arrival of my mother and myself. I was in my fifteenth year. He told me that he was in love with one of the Empress' maids of honor, who had been dismissed from court because of the misfortune of her mother—one Madame Lopukhina, who had been exiled to Siberia—that he would have liked to marry her, but that he was resigned to marry me because his aunt desired it.

Japanese girl practicing calligraphy, c. 1890.

I had three tutors: Simeon Theodorsky to instruct me in the Greek Orthodox faith, Basil Adadurov for the Russian language, and Landé, the ballet master, for dancing.

I used the time to learn Russian and play the harpsichord, and I bought myself books, so that at fifteen years of age I was isolated in my room and rather studious for my age. At the end of our stay in Moscow, Count Gyllenborg arrived. He was a man of great intelligence who was no longer young and whom my mother esteemed greatly. For my part, I was somewhat in his debt because in Hamburg, seeing that my mother paid little or no attention to me, he had told her that she was wrong and that I was certainly a child far beyond my years. Once in Petersburg, he came to visit us and as in Hamburg, where he had always told me that I had a very philosophical turn of mind, he asked me how my philosophy was faring in the whirlwind in which I had landed. I told him what I was doing in my room. He told me that a philosopher of fifteen could not yet know herself and that I was surrounded by so many pitfalls that I would stumble unless my soul was of an utterly superior mettle, that I had to nourish it with the best readings possible, and to this end he recommended to me: Plutarch's *Lives of Illustrious Men*, *The Life of Cicero* by Middleton, and *The Cause of the Grandeur and Decline of the Roman Republic* by Montesquieu. I immediately sent for these books, which were difficult to find in Petersburg at that time, and I told him that I was going to compose my portrait so that he could see whether or not I knew myself. I actually did put in writing my portrait, which I entitled "Portrait of the Philosopher at Age Fifteen," and I gave it to him. Many years later, I found this work and was astonished by the depth of self-knowledge that it contained. Unfortunately I burned it that same year along with all my other papers, fearing to keep a single one in my apartment during the unfortunate affair of Count Bestuzhev.

Catherine the Great, *from her memoirs. The daughter of an obscure German prince, Catherine arrived in Russia in 1744 at the age of fourteen to marry the grand duke. When her husband gained power in 1762, she staged a military coup resulting in his death and her coronation. One of her first acts was to secularize the clergy's ownership of one third of Russia's land and serfs.*

1981: New York City

DONALD BARTHELME
TEACHES PHILOSOPHY

Well, we had all these children out planting trees, see, because we figured that... that was part of their education, to see how you know the root systems... and also the sense of responsibility, taking care of things, being individually responsible. You know what I mean. And the trees all died. They were orange trees. I don't know why they died, they just died. Something wrong with the soil possibly or maybe the stuff we got from the nursery wasn't the best. We complained about it. So we've got thirty kids there, each kid had his or her own little tree to plant, and we've got these thirty dead trees. All these kids looking at these little brown sticks. It was depressing.

It wouldn't have been so bad except that just a couple of weeks before the thing with the trees, the snakes all died. But I think that the snakes—well, the reason that the snakes kicked off was that... you remember, the boiler was shut off for four days because of the strike, and that was explicable. It was something you could explain to the kids because of the strike. I mean, none of their parents would let them cross the picket line and they knew there was a strike going on and what it meant. So when things got started up again and we found the snakes they weren't too disturbed.

With the herb gardens it was probably a case of overwatering, and at least now they know not to overwater. The children were very conscientious with the herb gardens and some of them probably... you know, slipped them a little extra water when we weren't looking. Or maybe... well, I don't like to think about sabotage, although it did occur to us. I mean, it was something that crossed our minds. We were thinking that way probably because before that the gerbils had died, and the white mice had died, and the salamander... well, now they know not to carry them around in plastic bags.

Of course we *expected* the tropical fish to die, that was no surprise. Those numbers, you look at them crooked and they're belly-up on the surface. But the lesson plan called for a tropical-fish input at that point, there was nothing we could do, it happens every year, you just have to hurry past it.

We weren't even supposed to have a puppy.

We weren't even supposed to have one, it was just a puppy the Murdoch girl found under a Gristede's truck one day and she was afraid the truck would run over it when the driver had finished making his delivery, so she stuck it in her knapsack and brought it to school with her. So we had this puppy. As soon as I saw the puppy I thought, "Oh Christ, I bet it will live for about two weeks and then...." And that's what it did. It wasn't supposed to be in the classroom at all, there's some kind of regulation about it, but you can't tell them they can't have a puppy when the puppy is already there, right in front of them, running around on the floor and yap-yap-yapping. They named it Edgar—that is, they named it after me. They had a lot of fun running after it and yelling, "Here, Edgar! Nice Edgar!" Then they'd laugh like hell. They enjoyed the ambiguity. I enjoyed it myself. I don't mind being kidded. They made a little house for it in the supply closet and all that. I don't know what it died of. Distemper, I guess. It probably hadn't had any shots. I got it out of there before the kids got to school. I checked the supply closet each morning, routinely because I knew what was going to happen. I gave it to the custodian.

> *What does labor want? We want more schoolhouses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, to make manhood more noble, womanhood more beautiful, and childhood more happy and bright.*
>
> —*Samuel Gompers, 1893*

And then there was this Korean orphan that the class adopted through the Help the Children program; all the kids brought in a quarter a month, that was the idea. It was an unfortunate thing; the kid's name was Kim and maybe we adopted him too late or something. The cause of death was not stated in the letter we got, they suggested we adopt another child instead and sent us some interesting case histories, but we didn't have the heart. The class took it pretty hard, they began (I think, nobody ever said anything to me directly) to feel that maybe there was something wrong with the school. But I don't think there's anything wrong with the school, particularly; I've seen better and I've seen worse. It was just a run of bad luck. We had an extraordinary number of parents passing away, for instance. There were I think two heart attacks and two suicides, one drowning, and four killed together in a car accident. One stroke. And we had the usual heavy mortality rate among the grandparents, or maybe it was heavier this year—it seemed so. And finally the tragedy.

We are not quite at our ease in the presence of a schoolmaster because we are conscious that he is not quite at his ease in ours. He is awkward and out of place in the society of his equals. He comes like Gulliver from among his little people, and he cannot fit the stature of his understanding to yours. He is so used to teaching that he wants to be teaching you.

—Charles Lamb, 1821

The tragedy occurred when Matthew Wein and Tony Mavrogordo were playing over where they're excavating for the new federal office building. There were all these big wooden beams stacked, you know, at the edge of the excavation. There's a court case coming out of that: the parents are claiming that the beams were poorly stacked. I don't know what's true and what's not. It's been a strange year.

I forgot to mention Billy Brandt's father, who was knifed fatally when he grappled with a masked intruder in his home.

One day, we had a discussion in class. They asked me, where did they go? The trees, the salamander, the tropical fish, Edgar, the poppas and mommas, Matthew and Tony, where did they go? And I said, I don't know, I don't know. And they said, who knows? And I said, nobody knows. And they said, is death that which gives meaning to life? And I said, no, life is that which gives meaning to life. Then they said, but isn't death, considered such a fundamental datum, the means by which the taken-for-granted mundanity of the everyday may be transcended in the direction of—

I said, yes, maybe.

They said, we don't like it.

I said, that's sound.

They said, it's a bloody shame!

I said, it is.

They said, will you make love now with Helen (our teaching assistant) so that we can see how it is done? We know you like Helen.

I do like Helen but I said that I would not.

We've heard so much about it, they said, but we've never seen it.

I said I would be fired and that it was never, or almost never, done as a demonstration. Helen looked out of the window.

They said, please, please make love with Helen, we require an assertion of value, we are frightened.

I said that they shouldn't be frightened (although I am often frightened) and that there was value everywhere. Helen came and embraced me. I kissed her a few times on the brow. We held each other. The children were excited. Then there was a knock on the door. I opened the door, and the new gerbil walked in. The children cheered wildly.

From "The School." Barthelme wrote for the Houston Post, *served in the Korean War, and acted as the director of the Houston Contemporary Arts Museum before publishing his first book of self-described "collage" short stories in 1964 under the title* Come Back, Dr. Caligari.

c. 1813: London

JOHN STUART MILL'S READING LIST

I have no remembrance of the time when I began to learn Greek. I have been told that it was when I was three years old. My earliest recollection on the subject is that of committing to memory what my father termed vocables, being lists of common Greek words with their signification in English, which he wrote out for me on cards. Of grammar, until some years later I learnt no more than the inflexions of the nouns and verbs, but after a course of vocables, proceeded at once to translation; and I faintly remember going through Aesop's *Fables*, the first Greek book which I read. The *Anabasis*, which I remember better, was the second. I learnt no Latin until my eighth year. At that time I had read, under my father's tuition, a number of Greek prose authors, among whom I remember the whole of Herodotus, and of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and *Memorials of Socrates*; some of the *Lives* of the philosophers by Diogenes Laërtius; part of Lucian; and Isocrates' *Ad Demonicum* and *Ad Nicoclem*. I also read in 1813 the first six dialogues (in the common arrangement) of Plato, from the *Euthyphron* to the *Theaetetus* inclusive: which last dialogue, I venture to think, would have been better omitted, as it was totally impossible I should understand it. But my father in all his teaching demanded of me not only the utmost that I could do, but much that I could by no possibility have done. What he was himself willing to undergo for the sake of my instruction may be judged from the fact that I went through the whole process of preparing my Greek lessons in the same room and at the same table at which he was writing: and as in those days Greek and English lexicons were not, and I could make no more use of a Greek and Latin lexicon than could be made without having yet begun to learn Latin, I was forced to have recourse to him for the meaning of every word which I did not know. This incessant interruption he, one of the most impatient of men, submitted to, and wrote under that interruption several volumes of his *History* and all else that he had to write during those years.

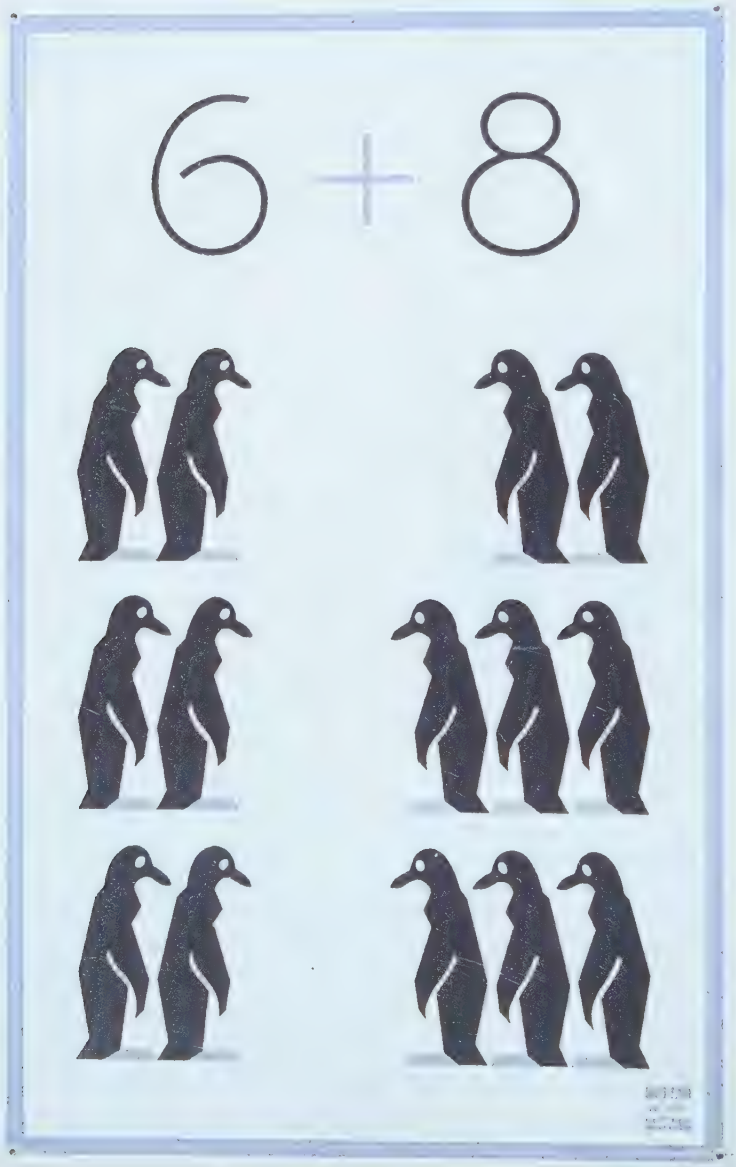
Greek teacher and child, terracotta figurine, second century BC.

The only thing besides Greek that I learnt as a lesson in this part of my childhood was arithmetic. This also my father taught me: it was the task of the evenings, and I well remember its disagreeableness. But the lessons were only a part of the daily instruction I received. Much of it consisted in the books I read by myself and my father's discourses to me, chiefly during our walks. From 1810 to the end of 1813 we were living in Newington Green, then an almost rustic neighbourhood. My father's health required considerable and constant exercise, and he walked habitually before breakfast, generally in the green lanes toward Hornsey. In these walks I always accompanied him, and with my earliest recollections of green fields and wild flowers is mingled that of the account

I gave him daily of what I had read the day before. To the best of my remembrance this was a voluntary rather than a prescribed exercise. I made notes on slips of paper while reading and from these, in the morning walks, I told the story to him; for the books were chiefly histories, of which I read in this manner a great number: Robertson's histories, Hume, Gibbon. But my greatest delight, then and for long afterward, was Watson's *Philip the Second* and *Third*.

The heroic defence of the Knights of Malta against the Turks and of the revolted provinces of the Netherlands against Spain excited in me an intense and lasting interest. Next to Watson, my favorite historical reading was Hooke's history of Rome. Of Greece I had seen at that time no regular history except school abridgments and the last two or three volumes of a translation of Rollin's *Ancient History*, beginning with Philip of Macedon. But I read with great delight Langhorne's translation of Plutarch. In English history beyond the time at which Hume leaves off, I remember reading Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, though I cared little for anything in it except the wars and battles, and the historical part of the *Annual Register* from the beginning to about 1788, where the volumes my father borrowed for me from Mr. Bentham left off. I felt a lively interest in Frederick of Prussia during his difficulties and in Paoli, the Corsican patriot; but when I came to the American War, I took my part, like a child as I was (until set right by my father), on the wrong side, because it was called the English side. In these frequent talks about the books I read, he used, as opportunity offered, to give me explanations and ideas respecting civilization, government, morality, and mental cultivation, which he required me afterward to restate to him in my own words. He also made me read and give him a verbal account of many

Work Projects Administration poster promoting education, c. 1936–1941.



books which would not have interested me sufficiently to induce me to read them of myself: among others, Millar's *Historical View of the English Government*, a book of great merit for its time and which he highly valued; Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, McCrie's *Life of John Knox*, and even Sewell's and Rutty's histories of the Quakers. He was fond of putting into my hands books which exhibited men of energy and resource in unusual circumstances struggling against difficulties and overcoming them: of such works I remember Beaver's *African Memoranda* and Collins' account of the first settlement of New South Wales. Two books which I never wearied of reading were Anson's *Voyage*, so delightful to most young persons, and a collection (Hawkesworth's I believe) of voyages round the world in four volumes, beginning with Drake and ending with Cook and Bougainville. Of children's books, any more than of playthings, I had scarcely any except an occasional gift from a relation or acquaintance: among those I had, *Robinson Crusoe* was preeminent and continued to delight me through all my boyhood. It was no part however of my father's system to exclude books of amusement, though he allowed them very sparingly. Of such books he possessed at that time next to none, but he borrowed several for me; those which I remember are the *Arabian Nights*, Cazotte's *Arabian Tales*, *Don Quixote*, Miss Edgeworth's *Popular Tales*, and a book of some reputation in its day, Brooke's *Fool of Quality*.

In my eighth year I commenced learning Latin in conjunction with a younger sister, to whom I taught it as I went on and who afterward repeated the lessons to my father. From this time, other sisters and brothers being successively added as pupils, a considerable part of my day's work consisted of this preparatory teaching. It was a part which I greatly disliked; the more so as I was held responsible for the lessons of my pupils in almost as full a sense as for my own. I however derived from this discipline the great advantage of learning more thoroughly and retaining more lastingly the things which I was set to teach; perhaps, too, the practice it afforded in explaining difficulties to others may even at that age have been useful. In other respects, the experience of my boyhood is not favorable to the plan of teaching children by means of one another. The teaching, I am sure, is very inefficient as teaching, and I well know that the relation between teacher and taught is not a good moral discipline to either. I went in this manner through the Latin grammar, and a considerable part of Cornelius Nepos and Caesar's *Commentaries*, but afterward added to the superintendence of these lessons much longer ones of my own.

> *If the heavens were all parchment, and the trees of the forest all pens, and every human being were a scribe, it would still be impossible to record all that I have learned from my teachers.*
>
> *—Jochanan ben Zakkai, c. 75*

In the same year in which I began Latin I made my first commencement in the Greek poets with the *Iliad*. After I had made some progress in this way my father put Pope's translation into my hands. It was the first English verse I had cared to read, and it became one of the books in which for many years I most delighted: I think I must have read it from twenty to thirty times through. I should not have thought it worthwhile to mention a taste apparently so natural to boyhood if I had not, as I think, observed that the keen enjoyment of this brilliant specimen of narrative and versification is not so universal with boys as I should have expected both a priori and from my individual experience. Soon after this time I commenced Euclid, and somewhat later, algebra, still under my father's tuition.

From his Autobiography. *Political economist and philosopher, the prolific Mill published* Principles of Political Economy *in 1848,* On Liberty *in 1859, and* Utilitarianism *in 1861. He won a local seat in Parliament in 1865, refusing to canvass for his cause or to pander to the local businesses. Two years later he helped found the first women's suffrage society in England.*

1762: Montmorency

HANDS-ON LEARNING

I hate books; they only teach us to talk about things we know nothing about. Hermes, they say, engraved the elements of science on pillars lest a deluge should destroy them. Had he imprinted them on men's hearts they would have been preserved by tradition. Well-trained minds are the pillars on which human knowledge is most deeply engraved.

Is there no way of correlating so many lessons scattered through so many books, no way of focusing them on some common object, easy to see, interesting to follow, and stimulating even to a child? Could we but discover a state in which all man's needs appear in such a way as to appeal to the child's mind, a state in which the ways of providing for these needs are as easily developed, the simple and stirring portrayal of this state should form the earliest training of the child's imagination.

Eager philosopher, I see your own imagination at work. Spare yourself the trouble; this state is already known—it is described, with due respect to you, far better than you could describe it, at least with greater truth and simplicity. Since we must have books, there is one book which, to my thinking, supplies the best treatise on an education according to nature. This is the first book Émile will read; for a long time it will form his whole library, and it will always retain an honored place. It will be the text to which all our talks about natural science are but the commentary. It will serve to test our progress toward a right judgment, and it will always be read with delight, so long as our taste is unspoiled. What is this wonderful book? Is it Aristotle? Pliny? Buffon? No; it is *Robinson Crusoe*.

Robinson Crusoe on his island, deprived of the help of his fellow men, without the means of carrying on the various arts, yet finding food, preserving his life, and procuring a certain amount of comfort—this is the thing to interest people of all ages, and it can be made attractive to children in all sorts of ways. We shall thus make a reality of that desert island which formerly served as an illustration. The condition, I confess, is not that of a social being, nor is it in all probability Émile's own condition, but he should use it as a standard of comparison for all other conditions. The surest way to raise him above prejudice and to base his judgments on the true relations of things is to put him in the place of a solitary man, and to judge all things as they would be judged by such a man in relation to their own utility.

This novel, stripped of irrelevant matter, begins with Robinson's shipwreck on his island and ends with the coming of the ship which bears him from it, and it will furnish Émile with material, both for work and play, during the whole period we are considering. His head should be full of it: he should always be busy with his castle, his goats, his plantations. Let him learn in detail, not from books but from things, all that is necessary in such a case. Let him think he is Robinson himself; let him see himself clad in skins, wearing a tall cap, a great cutlass—all the grotesque getup of Robinson Crusoe, even to the umbrella which he will scarcely need. He should anxiously consider what steps to take: Will this or that be wanting? He should examine his hero's conduct: Has he omitted nothing, is there nothing he could have done better? He should carefully note his mistakes so as not to fall into them himself in similar circumstances, for you may be sure he will plan out just such a settlement for himself. This is the genuine castle in the air of this happy age, when the child knows no other happiness but food and freedom.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *from* Émile. *The least academic of the modern philosophers, Rousseau published the* Discourse on the Origins of Inequality *in 1755 and* The Social Contract *in 1762. Both books added fuel to the fire of the French Revolution.* Émile *outraged members of the French* parlements *and was burned in Paris upon its publication. He lived his later life in exile until his death at the age of sixty-six in 1778.*

1637: Leiden

RENÉ DESCARTES DELIVERS HIMSELF FROM ERROR

I have been nourished on letters since my childhood, and since I was given to believe that by their means a clear and certain knowledge could be obtained of all that is useful in life, I had an extreme desire to acquire instruction. But so soon as I had achieved the entire course of study at the close of which one is usually received into the ranks of the learned, I entirely changed my opinion. For I found myself embarrassed with so many doubts and errors that it seemed to me that the effort to instruct myself had no effect other than the increasing discovery of my own ignorance. And yet I was studying at one of the most celebrated schools in Europe, where I thought that there must be men of learning if they were to be found anywhere in the world. I learned there all that others learned; and not being satisfied with the sciences that we were taught, I even read through all the books which fell into my hands, treating of what is considered most curious and rare. Along with this I knew the judgments that others had formed of me, and I did not feel that I was esteemed inferior to my fellow students, although there were among them some destined to fill the places of our masters. And finally our century seemed to me as flourishing and as fertile in great minds as any which had preceded. And this made me take the liberty of judging all others by myself and of coming to the conclusion that there was no learning in the world such as I was formerly led to believe it to be.

I did not omit, however, always to hold in esteem those exercises which are the occupation of the schools. I knew that the languages which one learns there are essential for the understanding of all ancient literature; that fables with their charm stimulate the mind and histories of memorable deeds exalt it; and that, when read with discretion, these books assist in forming a sound judgment. I was aware that the reading of all good books is indeed like a conversation with the noblest men of past centuries who were the authors of them—nay, a carefully studied conversation in which they reveal to us

The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp, by Rembrandt van Rijn, 1632.

none but the best of their thoughts. I deemed eloquence to have a power and beauty beyond compare; that poesy has most ravishing delicacy and sweetness; that in mathematics there are the subtlest discoveries and inventions which may accomplish much in satisfying the curious, in furthering all the arts, and in diminishing man's labor; that those writings that deal with morals contain much that is instructive, and many exhortations to virtue which are most useful;

Most learned men are like courtiers. Sometimes they are just as greedy, intriguing, treacherous, and cruel; and the only difference between the pests of the court and the pests of the school is that the latter are the more ridiculous.

—Voltaire, 1736

that theology points out the way to heaven; that philosophy teaches us to speak with an appearance of truth on all things, and causes us to be admired by the less learned; that jurisprudence, medicine, and all other sciences bring honor and riches to those who cultivate them; and finally, that it is good to have examined all things, even those most full of superstition and falsehood, in order that we may know their just value and avoid being deceived by them.

Most of all was I delighted with mathematics because of the certainty of its demonstrations and the evidence of its reasoning; but I did not yet understand its true use, and, believing that it was of service only in the mechanical arts, I was astonished that, seeing how firm and solid was its basis, no loftier edifice had been reared thereupon. On the other hand I compared the works of the ancient pagans which deal with morals to palaces most superb and magnificent, which are yet built on sand and mud alone. They praise the virtues most highly and show them to be more worthy of being prized than anything else in the world, but they do not sufficiently teach us to become acquainted with them, and often that which is called by a fine name is nothing but insensibility, pride, despair, or parricide.

I honored our theology and aspired as much as anyone to reach to heaven, but having learned to regard it as a most highly assured fact that the road is not less open to the most ignorant than to the most learned, and that the revealed truths which conduct thither are quite above our intelligence, I should not have dared to submit them to the feebleness of my reasonings. And I thought that, in order to undertake to examine them and succeed in so doing, it was necessary to have some extraordinary assistance from above and to be more than a mere man.

I shall not say anything about philosophy, but that, seeing that it has been cultivated for many centuries by the best minds that have ever lived, and that nevertheless no single thing is to be found in it which is not subject of dispute, and in consequence which is not dubious, I had not enough presumption to hope to fare better there than other men had done. And also, considering how many conflicting opinions there may be regarding the selfsame matter, all supported by learned people while there can never be more than one which is true, I esteemed as well-nigh false all that only went as far as being probable.

This is why, as soon as age permitted me to emerge from the control of my tutors, I entirely quitted the study of letters. And resolving to seek no other science than that which could be found in myself, or at least in the great book of the world, I employed the rest of my youth in travel, in seeing courts and armies, in intercourse with men of diverse temperaments and conditions, in collecting varied experiences, in proving myself in the various predicaments in which I was placed by fortune, and under all circumstances bringing my mind to bear on the things which came before it so that I might derive some profit from my experience. For it seemed to me that I might meet with much more truth in the reasonings that each man makes on the matters that specially concern him, and the issue of which would very soon punish him if he made a wrong judgment, than in the case of those made by a man of letters in his study touching speculations which lead to no result, and which bring about no other consequences to himself excepting that

he will be all the more vain the more they are removed from common sense, since in this case it proves him to have employed so much the more ingenuity and skill in trying to make them seem probable. And I always had an excessive desire to learn to distinguish the true from the false, in order to see clearly in my actions and to walk with confidence in this life.

It is true that while I only considered the manners of other men I found in them nothing to give me settled convictions; and I remarked in them almost as much diversity as I had formerly seen in the opinions of philosophers. So much was this the case that the greatest profit which I derived from their study was that, in seeing many things which, although they seem to us very extravagant and ridiculous, were yet commonly received and approved by other great nations, I learned to believe nothing too certainly of which I had only been convinced by example and custom. Thus little by little I was delivered from many errors which might have obscured our natural vision and rendered us less capable of listening to reason. But after I had employed several years in thus studying the book of the world and trying to acquire some experience, I one day formed the resolution of also making myself an object of study and of employing all the strength of my mind in choosing the road I should follow. This succeeded much better, it appeared to me, than if I had never departed either from my country or my books.

From A Discourse on Method. *While embarking on his self-proclaimed journey in 1619 to study "the book of the world," Descartes in Bohemia was visited by three dreams revealing his future as a philosopher and scientist. Later that year he invented analytic geometry and formulated a universal method of deductive reasoning.*

Thought Control

Books condemned in U.S. public schools during the 1980s

1980: Verona, New York. John Knowles' *A Separate Peace* challenged as a "filthy, trashy, sex novel."

1981: Jackson County, Florida. George Orwell's *1984* challenged for being "pro-Communist" and containing "explicit sexual matter."

1982: Wise County, Virginia. Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* challenged for passages deemed sexually offensive.

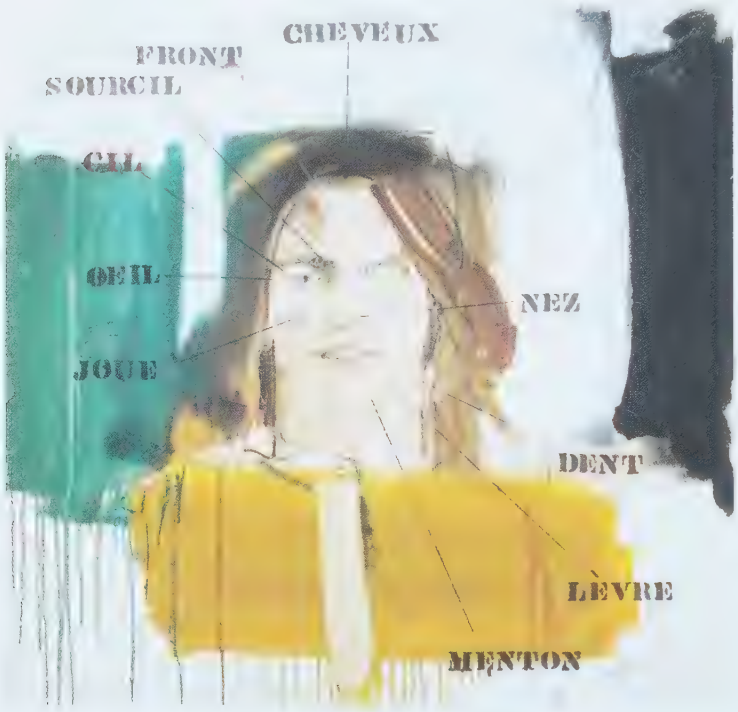
1987: Canton, Michigan. D.T. Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings* challenged because it treats Buddhism in "such a way that the reader could very likely embrace its teachings and choose this as his religion."

1989: Laytonville, California. Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* challenged because it "criminalizes the foresting industry."

c. 500 BC: Lu

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND

The Master said, "At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I came to be free from doubts; at fifty I understood the decree of heaven; at sixty my ear was attuned; at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line."



Parts of the Face: French Vocabulary Lesson, by Larry Rivers, 1961. Art © Estate of Larry Rivers/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

The Master said, "A man is worthy of being a teacher who gets to know what is new by keeping fresh in his mind what he is already familiar with."

The Master said, "Quietly to store up knowledge in my mind, to learn without flagging, to teach without growing weary, these present me with no difficulties."

The Master instructs under four heads: culture, moral conduct, doing one's best, and being trustworthy in what one says.

The Master said, "Men of antiquity studied to improve themselves; men today study to impress others."

The Master said, "Do I possess knowledge? No, I do not. A rustic put a question to me and my mind was a complete blank. I kept hammering at the two sides of the question until I got everything out of it."

The Master said, "Grant me a few more years so that I may study at the age of fifty and I shall be free from major errors."

The Master said, "I was not born with knowledge but, being fond of antiquity, I am quick to seek it."

The Master said, "There is nothing I can do with a man who is not constantly saying, 'What am I to do? What am I to do?'"

The Master said, "It is quite a remarkable feat for a group of men who are together all day long merely to indulge themselves in acts of petty cleverness without ever touching on the subject of morality in their conversation!"

The Master said, "I once spent all day thinking without taking food and all night thinking without going to bed, but I found that I gained nothing from it. It would have been better for me to have spent the time in learning."

Confucius said, "Those who are born with knowledge are the highest. Next come those who attain knowledge through study. Next again come those who turn to study after having been vexed by difficulties. The common people, insofar as they make no effort to study even after having been vexed by difficulties, are the lowest."

Confucius, *from the* Analects. *Confucius began teaching the tenets of self-cultivation in his thirties after having served as a granary bookkeeper. He believed that the object of education was the betterment of society, and Confucian ideals of familial piety and honesty served as the basis for Chinese society on and off for more than two millennia.*

c. 1490: Milan

MATTERS OF PERSPECTIVE

He is a poor pupil who does not surpass his master.

There are many men who have a yearning desire to be able to draw, but are temperamentally unsuited to it, as may be seen from those boys who, lacking diligence, never finish their copies with shading.

A youth should first learn perspective, then the proportions of all things. Next he should learn from the hand of a good master to gain familiarity with fine limbs, then from work done in three dimensions along with the drawing done from it, and then from a good example from nature.

We plainly know that sight is one of the swiftest actions that there is, and that in one moment it takes in an infinite number of forms. Nevertheless it can only comprehend one thing at a time. Let us suppose that you, reader, were to glance over the whole of this written page: you would instantly judge it to be full of various letters but you would not in that time recognize what the letters were, nor what they might mean. And so you have to proceed word by word and line by line if you wish to gather information from these letters. If you wish to climb to the top of a building you will have to go up step by step, otherwise it will be impossible to arrive at the top. So I say to you, whom nature inclines to this art, that if you wish to have a true knowledge of the forms of objects you should commence with their details, and not pass on to the second stage until you already have the first committed to memory and well practiced. And if you do otherwise you will be throwing away your time, or, truly, prolonging your study considerably. Remember, learn diligence before speedy execution.

Once this knowledge is acquired you should move on to study the actions of figures in accordance with the events with which man is engaged and to compose figure compositions, for which the preparatory study should be based upon natural actions individually as and when they might occur. And one should be on the lookout for these in the streets and the city squares and in the country, and note them down, broadly indicating the outlines; that is, for a head one should make an "O," for an arm a straight or bent line, and the same for the legs and the trunk. Then on the return home work up these notes into a complete form.

> *Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned and, however early a man's training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.*
>
> *—T.H. Huxley, 1877*

The adversary says that to gain practice and produce a quantity of work it is better to devote the initial study period to drawing various compositions that have been done either on paper or on walls by various masters, and that, in doing this, practice is speedily acquired together with good habits.

To this I reply that the habits would be good if based upon the well-composed works of studious masters. But since such masters as these are so rare as to be seldom found, it is safer to go to the objects in nature than to those imitated to much worse effect from nature and accordingly to acquire bad habits. He who can go to the fountain does not go to the vessel.

Leonardo da Vinci, *from his collected writings. Leonardo at the age of fifteen began a ten-year apprenticeship with Andrea del Verrocchio during which time he was accepted into the Florentine painters' guild. In 1482 he moved to Milan, serving for the next seventeen years as Duke Ludovico Sforza's official "painter and engineer." Though fewer than twenty of his paintings survive, Leonardo is considered one of the most influential painters of all time.*

1946: Greenwich Village

THE UNIVERSITY IN EXILE

Taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, which paid my tuition and gave me a monthly allowance, I enrolled at the New School for Social Research on West Twelfth Street. I'd had a couple of semesters at Brooklyn College before going into the army, but I was bored because I didn't know what I wanted to do with what I was learning. I couldn't see any immediate use for it. But now going to school was part of the postwar romance. Studying was almost as good as art. The world was our studio.

In the first place God made idiots. This was for practice. Then he made school boards.

—Mark Twain, 1897

Like the Village itself, the New School was at its best in 1946. After a war, civilization feels like a luxury, and people went to the New School the way you go to a party, almost like going abroad. Education was chic and sexy in those days. It was not yet open to the public.

The people in the lobby of the New School were excited, expectant, dressed to the teeth. They struck poses, examined one another with approval. They had a blind date with culture, and anything could happen. Young, attractive, hip, they were the best Americans. For local color, there was a sprinkling of bohemians and young men just out of the service who were still wearing their khakis and fatigues, as young matrons in the suburbs go shopping in their tennis dresses.

Known as the "university in exile," the New School had taken in a lot of professors—Jewish and non-Jewish—who had fled from Hitler on the same boats as the psychoanalysts. Because they were displaced themselves, or angry with us for failing to understand history, the professors did their best to make us feel like exiles in our own country. While the psychoanalysts listened in their private offices—with all the detachment of those who had really known anxiety—to Americans retailing their dreams, the professors analyzed those same dreams wholesale in the packed classrooms of the New School.

All the courses I took were about *what's wrong*: what's wrong with the government, with the family, with interpersonal relations and intrapersonal relations—what's wrong with our dreams, our loves, our jobs, our perceptions and conceptions, our aesthetics, the human condition itself.

They were furious, the professors, at the ugly turn the world had taken and they stalked the halls of the New School as if it were a concentration camp where we were the victims and they were the warders, the storm troopers of humanism. The building resounded with guttural cries: *Kunstwissenschaft*, Zeitgeist and Weltanschauung, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, Schadenfreude, *Schwärmerei*. Their accents were so impenetrable that some of them seemed to speak in tongues and the students understood hardly a word.

We admired the German professors. We had won the fight against fascism and now, with their help, we would defeat all the dark forces in the culture and the psyche. As a reaction to our victory, sensitive Americans had entered an apologetic phase in our national life and there was nothing the professors could say that was too much. We came out of class with dueling scars.

I took a course in the psychology of American culture, given by Erich Fromm. Though he had just arrived, he knew America better than we did, because it impinged on him. His *Escape from Freedom*, which had recently been published, was one of those paeans of lyrical pessimism that Germans specialize in, like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, or Spengler. Sitting on a platform behind a desk, like a judge in criminal court, he passed his remorseless judgment on us. We were unwilling, he said, to accept the anguish of freedom. According to him, we feared freedom, saw it as madness, epistemology run amok. In the name of freedom, we accepted everything he said. We ac-

cepted it because we liked the sound of it—no one knew then that we would turn out to be right in trying to escape from freedom.

Fromm was short and plump. His jaws were broader than his forehead and he reminded me of a brooding hen. Yet, like everyone else, I sat spellbound through his lectures. I'll never forget the night he described a typical American family going for a pointless drive on a Sunday afternoon, joylessly eating ice cream at a roadhouse on the highway, and then driving heavily home. Fromm was one of the first—perhaps the very first—to come out against pointlessness. It was a historic moment, like Einstein discovering relativity or Heidegger coming up against nothingness.

I also studied Gestalt psychology with Rudolf Arnheim, but here I confess I was disappointed. It seemed to me that Germans were sometimes stunned into a kind of stupor by an ordinary insight, which they would then try to elevate into a philosophy or a system. Colliding with a modest fact in the midst of their abstraction, they just couldn't get over it.

The Gestalt psychologists had discovered that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts—something everybody already knew—and Arnheim spent most of the semester demonstrating this. I kept waiting for him to go on, but he just gave us more experiments, more evidence. It all depended on rats. We never talked about people—only rats. In the advanced courses, it was apes.

Max Wertheimer, the father of Gestalt psychology, made a guest appearance in the class. He was a small man, dressed in a frock coat, and he wore his hair en brosse. The high point of his lecture was a demonstration of requiredness, a key term in Gestalt thinking. It meant, if I understood him, that each thing implied other things, or a context, something like a counterpoint of structures. He showed us what he meant with a little experiment of his own. First he taught us a complicated African handclap, and then when he had us clapping away, he himself set up a weird howling accompaniment.

I attended a special lecture in the auditorium, given by Karen Horney, on the psychology of women. Like Fromm, Horney was a Freudian revisionist. In one of her books, she had said that, in a sense, the neurotic was healthier than the so-called normal person, because he "protested." Protesting was like testifying. Since everyone at the New School proudly considered him or herself neurotic—it wasn't respectable not to be—Horney's message was just what we wanted to hear.

> *What harm is there in getting knowledge and learning, were it from a sot, a pot, a fool, a winter mitten, or an old slipper?*
>
> *—François Rabelais, 1533*

I don't remember much of the lecture, but it had an unforgettable aftermath. A woman with a fur coat draped over her shoulders rose from her seat and asked a question. "But what about penis envy?" she said. "You haven't said anything about penis envy."

There was a shocked silence. It was like the time, when I was a child, that someone threw a stink bomb in a neighborhood movie house. Horney just sat there on the platform without speaking, gazing at the woman like an analyst contemplating a hopeless patient she had taken against her better judgment.

Her face seemed to swell. She raised one hand above her head and then the other, as if she would try to climb up out of the auditorium and the New School. Then, closing her hands into fists, she slammed them down on the desk. "What about it?" she said. Her voice rose to a shriek. "What about it? I don't have a penis. Can you give me one?"

Anatole Broyard, *from* Kafka Was the Rage: A Greenwich Village Memoir. *A noted literary critic for the* New York Times *in the 1970s and '80s, Broyard concealed his Creole ancestry and was often derided as a black man passing as a white. Before his death in 1990, he published two books,* Aroused by Books *and* Men, Women and Other Anticlimaxes.

1928: Dublin

OLD CLOTHES UPON OLD STICKS

I
I walk through the long schoolroom questioning;
A kind old nun in a white hood replies;
The children learn to cipher and to sing,
To study reading books and histories,
To cut and sew, be neat in everything
In the best modern way—the children's eyes
In momentary wonder stare upon
A sixty-year-old smiling public man.

II
I dream of a Ledaean body, bent
Above a sinking fire, a tale that she
Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event
That changed some childish day to tragedy—
Told, and it seemed that our two natures blent
Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,
Or else, to alter Plato's parable,
Into the yolk and white of the one shell.

III
And thinking of that fit of grief or rage
I look upon one child or t'other there
And wonder if she stood so at that age—
For even daughters of the swan can share
Something of every paddler's heritage—
And had that color upon cheek or hair,
And thereupon my heart is driven wild:
She stands before me as a living child.

IV
Her present image floats into the mind—
Did Quattrocento finger fashion it
Hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind
And took a mess of shadows for its meat?
And I though never of Ledaean kind
Had pretty plumage once—enough of that,
Better to smile on all that smile, and show
There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

V

What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap
Honey of generation had betrayed,
And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape
As recollection or the drug decide,
Would think her Son, did she but see that shape
With sixty or more winters on its head,
A compensation for the pang of his birth,
Or the uncertainty of his setting forth?

VI

Plato thought nature but a spume that plays
Upon a ghostly paradigm of things;
Solider Aristotle played the taws
Upon the bottom of a king of kings;
World-famous golden-thighed Pythagoras
Fingered upon a fiddlestick or strings
What a star sang and careless Muses heard:
Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird.

VII

Both nuns and mothers worship images,
But those the candles light are not as those
That animate a mother's reveries,
But keep a marble or a bronze repose.
And yet they too break hearts—O Presences
That passion, piety, or affection knows,
And that all heavenly glory symbolize—
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

VIII

Labor is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul.
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

William Butler Yeats, *"Among School Children." A politician and playwright as well as a poet, Yeats was fascinated by occultism and spiritualism. He was an active member of the Golden Dawn, a secret society that practiced ritual magic and offered initiation in a series of ten levels.*

1803: Königsberg

CLASS DISTINCTIONS

It may be said with truth that the children of the *working classes* are more spoiled than the children of those of *higher rank*, for the working classes play with their children like monkeys: singing to them, caressing, kissing, and dancing with them. They think indeed they are doing a kindness to their child in always running to him when he cries, and playing with him, etc.; but he only cries the oftener. If, on the other hand, no notice is taken of the child's crying, he will leave off at last—for no one cares to continue a fruitless task. Once a child has become accustomed to having all his whims gratified, it is afterward too late to begin to cross his will. On the other hand, if you do not mind the child's crying, he will soon get tired of it. But should his fancies always be gratified, both his character and his manners will be spoiled.

The child has as yet no idea of manners, but it goes far toward spoiling his natural disposition, so that afterward sharp measures are necessary to undo the evil caused by early indulgence. When attempts are made later on to break off the habit of giving way to all the child's wishes, his crying is then accompanied by a rage as fierce as any of which grown-up people are capable, only he has not the physical strength to exercise it. This is but what we must expect, for children who have been for so long accustomed merely to cry to get what they want become veritable despots, and are naturally aggrieved when their rule comes suddenly to an end; for even grown-up people who have been for some time in a high position find it very difficult if they are suddenly called upon to abdicate.

The *will* of children must not be broken, but merely bent in such a way that it may yield to natural obstacles. At the beginning, it is true, the child must obey blindly. It is unnatural that a child should command by his crying, and that the strong should obey the weak. Children should never, even in their earliest childhood, be humored because they cry, nor allowed to extort anything by crying. Parents often make a mistake in this, and then, wishing to undo the result of their overindulgence, they deny their children in later life whatever they ask for. It is, however, very wrong to refuse them without cause what they may naturally expect from the kindness of their parents merely for the sake of opposing them. They, being the weaker, should be made to feel the superior power of their parents.

Immanuel Kant, *from "On Pedagogy." In 1732 at the age of eight, Kant began his own education at a Latin school where he acquired a lifelong love of Lucretius. Later enrolled as a theology student at the University of Königsberg, his interest shifted from matters of God to gravity after reading Sir Isaac Newton. Kant published his first book in 1746 on the nature of kinetics.*

c. 500 BC: India

GUARDING THOUGHTS

As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back.

It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to hold in and flighty, rushing wherever it lists; a tamed mind brings happiness.

Let the wise man guard his thoughts, for they are difficult to perceive, very artful, and they rush wherever they list: thoughts well guarded bring happiness.

Those who bridle their mind which travels far, moves about alone, is without a body, and hides in the chamber of the heart will be free from the bonds of Mâra the tempter.

If a man's faith is unsteady, if he does not know the true law, if his peace of mind is troubled, his knowledge will never be perfect.

Knowing that this body is fragile like a jar, and making his thought firm like a fortress, one should attack Mâra the tempter with the weapon of knowledge, one should watch him when conquered, and should never rest.

Before long, alas, this body will lie on the earth: despised, without understanding, like a useless log.

From the Dhammapada. *The most celebrated of the scriptures to which Theravada Buddhists adhere, the "Way of Truth" is said to preserve 423 utterances of Siddhartha Gautama and is meant to guide devotees on the path to enlightenment.*

c. 1892: Basel

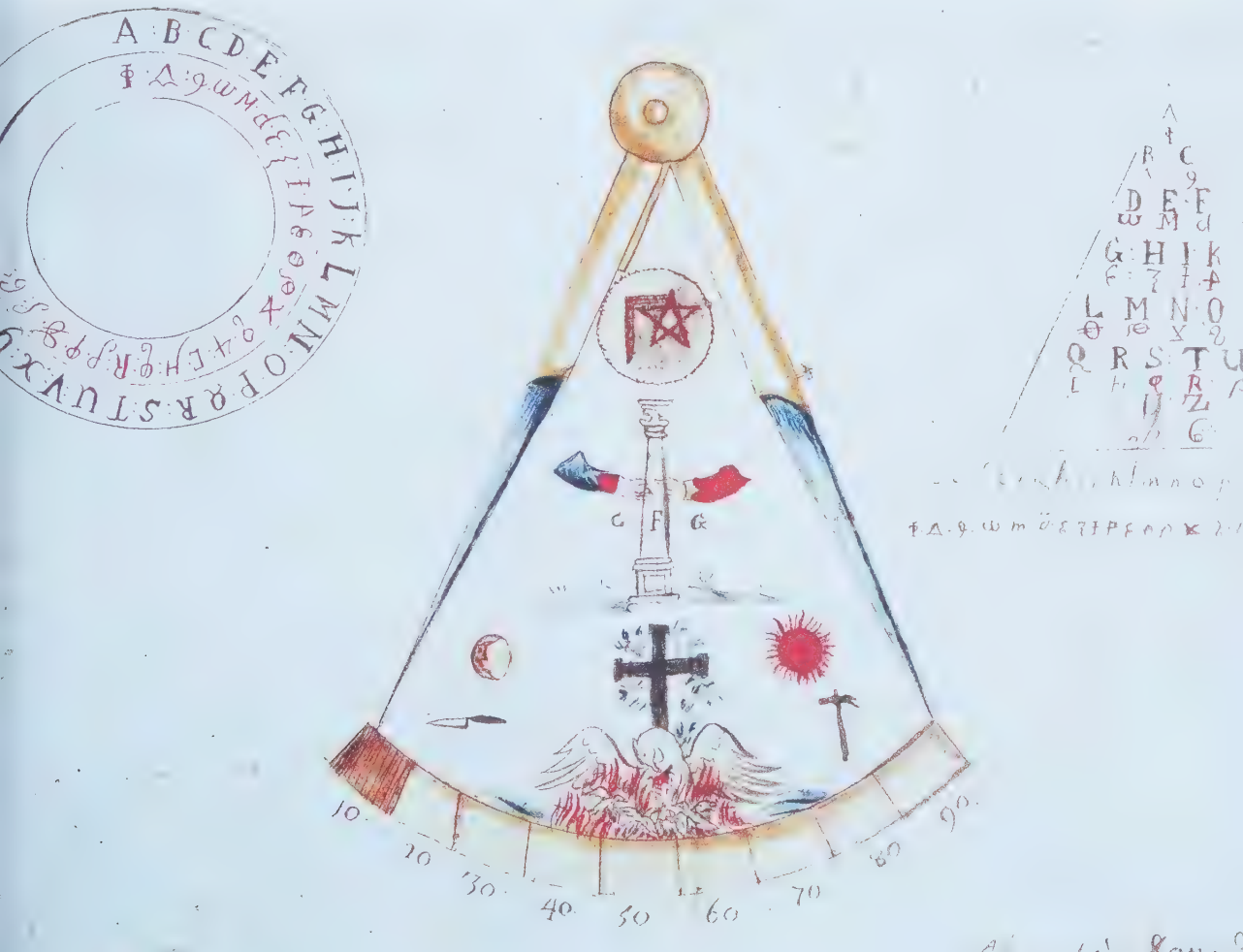
CARL GUSTAV JUNG UNDERGOES ANALYSIS

I was lazy and bored. The subjects for composition usually seemed to me shallow or silly, and my essays turned out accordingly: either careless or labored. I slipped through with average marks, and this suited me very well, as it fitted in with my general tendency not to be conspicuous. On the whole I sympathized with boys from poor families who, like myself, had come from nowhere, and I had a liking for those who were none too bright, though I tended to become excessively irritated by their stupidity and ignorance. For the fact of the matter was that they had something to offer which I craved deeply: in their simplicity they noticed nothing unusual about me. My "unusualness" was gradually beginning to give me the disagreeable, rather uncanny feeling that I must possess repulsive traits, of which I was not aware, that caused my teachers and schoolmates to shun me.

In the midst of these preoccupations the following incident burst on me like a thunderclap. We had been assigned a subject for composition which for once interested me. Consequently I set to work with a will and produced what seemed to me a carefully written and successful paper. I hoped to receive at least one of the highest marks for it—not the highest, of course, for that would have made me conspicuous, but one close to the top.

Our teacher was in the habit of discussing the compositions in order of merit. The first one he turned to was by the boy at the head of the class. That was all right. Then followed

Alphabet and various symbols of Italian masonry, 1815.



the compositions of the others, and I waited and waited in vain for my name. Still it did not come. "It just can't be," I thought, "that mine is so bad that it is even below these poor ones he has come to. What can be the matter?" Was I simply hors concours—which would mean being isolated and attracting attention in the most dreadful way of all?

Our children will not survive our habits of thinking, our failures of the spirit, our wreck of the universe into which we bring new life as blithely as we do. Mostly, our children will resemble our own misery and spite and anger, because we give them no choice about it. In the name of motherhood and fatherhood and education and good manners, we threaten and suffocate and bind and ensnare and bribe and trick children into wholesale emulation of our ways.

—June Jordan, 1978

When all the essays had been read, the teacher paused. Then he said, "Now I have one more composition—Jung's. It is by far the best, and I ought to have given it first place. But unfortunately it is a fraud. Where did you copy it from? Confess the truth!"

I shot to my feet, as horrified as I was furious, and cried, "I did not copy it! I went to a lot of trouble to write a good composition." But the teacher shouted at me, "You're lying! You could never write a composition like this. No one is going to believe that. Now—where did you copy it from?"

Vainly I swore to my innocence. The teacher clung to his theory. He became threatening. "I can tell you this: if I knew where you had copied it from, you would be chucked out of the school." And he turned away. My classmates threw odd glances at me, and I realized with horror that they were thinking, "Aha, so that's the way it is." My protestations fell on deaf ears.

I felt that from now on I was branded, and that all the paths which might have led me out of unusualness had been cut off. Profoundly disheartened and dishonored, I swore vengeance on the teacher, and if I had had an opportunity something straight out of the law of the jungle would have resulted. How in the world could I possibly prove that I had not copied the essay?

For days I turned this incident over in my thoughts, and again and again came to the conclusion that I was powerless, the sport of a blind and stupid fate that had marked me as a liar and a cheat. Now I realized many things I had not previously understood—for example, how it was that one of the teachers could say to my father, who had inquired about my conduct in school, "Oh, he's just average, but he works commendably hard." I was thought to be relatively stupid and superficial. That did not annoy me really. But what made me furious was that they should think me capable of cheating, and thus morally destroy me.

My grief and rage threatened to get out of control. And then something happened that I had already observed in myself several times before: there was a sudden inner silence, as though a soundproof door had been closed on a noisy room. It was as if a mood of cool curiosity came over me, and I asked myself, "What is really going on here? All right, you are excited. Of course the teacher is an idiot who doesn't understand your nature—that is, doesn't understand it any more than you do. Therefore he is as mistrustful as you are. You distrust yourself and others, and that is why you side with those who are naïve, simple, and easily seen through. One gets excited when one doesn't understand things."

From Memories, Dreams, Reflections. *The founder of analytical psychology and one of the twentieth-century's preeminent explorers of the human mind, Jung acquired a reputation as a womanizer because of rumored affairs with the many women who flocked to his office in Zurich to be relieved of their sexual anxieties. The author of many influential books, he published* Psychology of the Unconscious *in 1912 and* Man and His Symbols *in 1964.*

c. 1934: Harlem

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

When I was around nine or ten I wrote a play which was directed by a young, white schoolteacher, a woman, who then took an interest in me, and gave me books to read and, in order to corroborate my theatrical bent, decided to take me to see what she somewhat tactlessly referred to as "real" plays. Theatergoing was forbidden in our house, but, with the really cruel intuitiveness of a child, I suspected that the color of this woman's skin would carry the day for me. When, at school, she suggested taking me to the theater, I did not, as I might have done if she had been a Negro, find a way of discouraging her, but agreed that she should pick me up at my house one evening. I then very cleverly left all the rest to my mother, who suggested to my father, as I knew she would, that it would not be very nice to let such a kind woman make the trip for nothing. Also, since it was a schoolteacher, I imagine that my mother countered the idea of sin with the idea of "education," which word, even with my father, carried a kind of bitter weight.

Before the teacher came my father took me aside to ask *why* she was coming, what *interest* she could possibly have in our house, in a boy like me. I said I didn't know but I, too, suggested that it had something to do with education. And I understood that my father was waiting for me to say something—I didn't quite know what; perhaps that I wanted his protection against this teacher and her "education." I said none of these things and the teacher came and we went out. It was clear, during the brief interview in our living room, that my father was agreeing very much against his will and that he would have refused permission if he had dared. The fact that he did not dare caused me to despise him: I had no way of knowing that he was facing in that living room a wholly unprecedented and frightening situation.

Later, when my father had been laid off from his job, this woman became very important to us. She was really a very sweet and generous woman and went to a great deal of trouble to be of help to us, particularly during one awful winter. My mother called her by the highest name she knew: she said she was a "Christian." My father could scarcely disagree but during the four or five years of our relatively close association he never trusted her and was always trying to surprise in her open, Midwestern face the genuine, cunningly hidden, and hideous motivation. In later years, particularly when it began to be clear that this "education" of mine was going to lead me to perdition, he became more explicit and warned me that my white friends in high school were not really my friends and that I would see, when I was older, how white people would do anything to keep a Negro down. Some of them could be nice, he admitted, but none of them were to be trusted and most of them were not even nice. The best thing was to have as little to do with them as possible. I did not feel this way and I was certain, in my innocence, that I never would.

Julia Child on *The French Chef*, c. 1973.

James Baldwin, *from "Notes of a Native Son." One of America's most famous black writers in the fifties and sixties, Baldwin preached in a Harlem church before moving in his late teens to Greenwich Village, where he worked as a waiter and busboy while learning to write.*

1901: Princeton

EQUAL EDUCATION

Liberty is not itself government. In the wrong hands—in hands unpracticed, undisciplined—it is incompatible with government. Discipline must precede it—if necessary, the discipline of being under masters. Then will self-control make it a thing of life and not a thing of tumult: a tonic, not an insurgent madness in the blood. Shall we doubt, then, what the conditions precedent to liberty and self-government are, and what their invariable support and accompaniment must be, in the countries whose administration we have taken over in trust and particularly in those far Philippine Islands whose government is our chief anxiety? We cannot give them any quittance of the debt we ourselves have paid. They can have liberty no cheaper than we got it. They must first take the discipline of law, must first love order and instinctively yield to it. It is the heathen, not the free citizen of a self-governed country, who, "in his blindness bows down to wood and stone, and don't obey no orders unless they is his own." We are old in this learning and must be their tutors.

But we may set them upon the way with an advantage we did not have until our hard journey was more than half-made. We can see to it that the law which teaches them obedience is just law and evenhanded. We can see to it that justice be free and unpurchasable among them. We can make order lovely by making it the friend of every man and not merely the shield of some. We can teach them by our fairness in administration that there may be a power in government which, though imperative and irresistible by those who would cross or thwart it, does not act for its own aggrandizement, but is the guarantee that all shall fare alike. That will infinitely shorten their painful tutelage. Our pride, our conscience will not suffer us to give them less.

The whole solution lies less in our methods than in our temper. We must govern as those who learn and they must obey as those who are in tutelage. They are children and we are men in these deep matters of government and justice. If we have not learned the substance of these things, no nation is ever likely to learn it, for it is taken from life and not from books. But though children must be foolish, impulsive, headstrong, unreasonable, men may be arbitrary, self-opinionated, impervious, impossible, as the English were in their Oriental colonies until they learned. We should be inexcusable to repeat their blunders and wait as long as they waited to learn how to serve the peoples whom we govern. It is plain we shall have a great deal to learn: it is to be hoped we shall learn it fast.

The classroom—and not the trench—is the frontier of freedom now and forevermore.
—Lyndon B. Johnson

In the republic of learning everyone wants to command.
—Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, 1799

Education is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed. *—Joseph Stalin, 1934*

Woodrow Wilson, *from "The Ideals of America." The president of Princeton University and the governor of New Jersey before being elected president of the United States in 1912, Wilson during the years immediately preceding and following the Civil War grew up in Georgia, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. He once said of the South that it was "the only place in the world where nothing has to be explained to me."*

Students on hunger strike in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 1989. Photograph by Stuart Franklin.

c. 378 BC: Athens

PLATO QUIETS THE POETS

"Now, do you appreciate that the most important stage of any enterprise is the beginning, especially when something young and sensitive is involved? You see, that's when most of its formation takes place, and it absorbs every impression that anyone wants to stamp upon it."

"You're absolutely right."

"Shall we, then, casually allow our children to listen to any old stories made up by just anyone, and to take into their minds views which, on the whole, contradict those we'll want them to have as adults?"

"No, we won't allow that at all."

"So our first job, apparently, is to oversee the work of the story writers and to accept any good story they write but reject the others. We'll let nurses and mothers tell their children the acceptable ones, and we'll have them devote themselves far more to using these stories to form their children's minds than they do to using their hands to form their bodies. However, we'll have to disallow most of the stories they currently tell."

"Which stories?" he asked.

"If we examine the grander kind of story," I said, "that will give us insights into the more lightweight kind as well, because the same principle must be involved and both kinds are bound to have the same effect, don't you think?"

"That sounds fine to me," he replied, "but I don't even understand which stories you're describing as grander."

"The ones which Hesiod, Homer, and their fellow poets tell us. In the past, it's always been the poets who've composed untrue stories to tell people, and it's no different nowadays."

"Which stories?" he asked. "And what's their defect, in your view?"

"There is no defect which one ought to condemn more quickly and more thoroughly," I replied, "especially if the lies have no redeeming feature."

"Yes, but what *is* this defect?"

"Using the written word to give a distorted image of the nature of the gods and heroes, just

as a painter might produce a portrait which completely fails to capture the likeness of the original."

"Yes," he said, "it's quite right to find fault with that sort of thing. But how do they do that? What kinds of things do they say?"

"First and most important, since the subject is so important," I said, "there is no redeeming feature to the lies which Hesiod repeats about Uranus' deeds and Cronus' revenge on Uranus. Then there are Cronus' deeds and what his son did to him. Now, I think that even if these stories are true, they oughtn't to be told so casually

It is not light that we need, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.

—Frederick Douglass, 1852

to young people and people who lack discrimination; it's better to keep silent, and if one absolutely has to speak, to make them esoteric secrets told to as few people as possible, who are to have sacrificed no mere piglet, but something so large and rare that the smallest conceivable number of people get to hear them."

"Yes," he said, "these stories are definitely dangerous."

"And we must censor them in our community, Adeimantus," I said. "No young person is to hear stories which suggest that were he to commit the vilest of crimes, and were he to do his utmost to punish his father's crimes, he wouldn't be doing anything out of the ordinary but would simply be behaving like the first and the greatest gods."

"No, I absolutely agree," he said. "I share your view that these stories are unsuitable and shouldn't be repeated."

"And that's not all," I said. "The stories which have gods fighting and scheming and battling against one another are utterly unsuitable, too, because they're just as untrue. If the prospective guardians of our community are to loathe casual quarrels with one another, we must take good care that battles between gods and giants and all the other various tales of gods and heroes coming to blows with their relatives and friends don't occur in the stories they hear and the pictures they see. No, if we're somehow to convince them that fellow citizens never fall out with one another, that this is wrong, then that is the kind of story they must hear from childhood onward from the community's elders of both sexes; and the poets they'll hear when they're older must be forced to tell equivalent stories in their poetry. But we'd better not admit into our community the story of Hera being tied up by her son, or the episode when Hephaestus is hurled away by his father for trying to save his mother from a beating, or any of the battles between the gods which Homer has in his poetry, whether or not their intention is allegorical. The point is that a young person can't tell when something is allegorical and when it isn't, and any idea admitted by a person of that age tends to become almost ineradicable and permanent. All things considered, then, that is why a very great deal of importance should be placed upon ensuring that the first stories they hear are best adapted for their moral improvement."

"Yes, that makes sense," he said. "But suppose we were once again to be asked, in this context as well, what stories we meant, how would we respond?"

"Adeimantus," I said, "you and I are not making up stories at the moment; we're founding a community. Founders ought to know the broad outlines within which their poets are to compose stories, so that they can exclude any compositions which do not conform to those outlines; but they shouldn't themselves make stories up."

"You're right," he said. "But that's precisely the point: What are these guidelines for talking about the gods?"

"They'd be something like this," I said. "Whatever the type of poetry—epic, lyric, or tragic—God must of course always be portrayed as he really is."

"Yes, he must."

"Well, isn't God good, in fact, and shouldn't he be described as such?"

"Of course."

"And nothing good is harmful, is it?"

"I don't think so."

"Now, can anything harmless cause damage?"

"No, of course not."

"Can anything incapable of causing damage do anything bad?"

"Again, no."

"And something which never does bad couldn't be responsible for bad, could it?"

"Of course not."

"Well now, is goodness beneficial?"

"Yes."

"And it's responsible for doing good, then?"

"Yes."

"So goodness is not responsible for everything: it's responsible for things that are in a good state, but bad things cannot be attributed to it."

"Exactly," he said.

"The same goes for God, too, then," I said. "Since he is good, he cannot be responsible for everything, as is commonly said. He is responsible only for a small part of human life, and many things cannot be attributed to him—I mean, there's far more bad than good in the world. He and he alone must be held responsible for the good things, but responsibility for bad things must be looked for elsewhere and not attributed to God."

"I think you're absolutely right," he said.

"So," I said, "we shouldn't connive at Homer or any other poet making the stupid mistake of saying about the gods, 'Two jars sit on Zeus' threshold: one is full of good destinies, but the other is full of wretched destinies,' and that if Zeus mixes the two up together and doles them out to someone, that person 'sometimes meets with bad, sometimes with good,' whereas if he doesn't mix them up, but allots the pernicious ones to someone in an unadulterated form, that person 'is driven over the glorious earth by the evil of poverty.' Nor will we connive at them claiming that 'Zeus is the dispenser of both good and evil.'

"Moreover, we'll disapprove of the attribution of Pandarus' perjury and truce breaking to the agency of Athena and Zeus, and of

Richard Nixon (center, #12) photographed as a member of the Whittier College football team, early 1930s.

the gods' quarrel and its resolution to Themis and Zeus; and we'll not allow the younger generation to hear the idea which Aeschylus expresses as, 'When God wants to visit utter ruin on a household, he implants the cause in men.' No, if plays are composed (such as the one these lines are from) about Niobe's afflictions, or about the trials and tribulations of the descendants of Pelops, or about the Trojan War, the playwrights must either be prohibited from saying that God was responsible for these events; or if they do attribute them to God, they have to come up with an explanation which approximates the one we're looking for at the moment and say that what God did was right and good, in the sense that the people in question were being punished and therefore benefited. But poets should be prohibited from saying that these people were in a *bad* way as a result of being punished and that this was God's doing. The claim that the sinners were badly off because they were in need of punishment, and that in punishing them God was benefiting them, is permissible; but the claim that God, who is good, is responsible for any instance of badness is to be resisted as forcefully as possible by anyone who wants a well-regulated community—until it is never spoken and never heard by anyone of whatever age, whether the tale is told in verse or in prose. And the reasons are that the voicing of these views is sacrilege, they do us no good, and they are inconsistent with one another."

"I approve of this law," he said. "I'll be right behind you when you cast your vote for it."

From the Republic. *In 387 BC Plato founded the Academy in Athens to promote the systematic teaching of philosophy and science. Twenty years later, he accepted a position in Syracuse to teach the new king, Dionysius II, the necessity of being a philosopher in order to rule justly. The experiment failed, and when Plato came to define his ideal of the "philosopher-king," it was a man who was, by nature, a philosopher.*

Heraclitus, Greek Philosopher, by Peter Paul Rubens, seventeenth century.

1966: Yizhen

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

When Weihua first pointed out Teacher Guo to me, I was struck by her smallness: she looked like a fragile doll, with a small nose, small mouth, and delicate limbs. Her small eyes glinted behind thick glasses. Weihua told me that, first, she never smiled; second, she never talked about anything but politics; and third, she was boring. I was prepared for the worst.

My first conversation with Teacher Guo did nothing to disabuse me of my preconceptions. She told me that, as a middle school student, I would have to pay more attention to politics than I had in primary school. Without thinking, I blurted out, "Politics is boring!" Teacher Guo looked shocked. "Who told you that?" she asked. "My big brother," I answered. Her glinty eyes bored into me as she said, "You and Weihua both need to heighten your political consciousness."

A few days later, my homeroom teacher, Wen Xiu, called me to her office. She spoke gently. "Jianhua, I invited you here to tell you that what you told Teacher Guo was wrong. You should know better. You're not the son of uneducated peasants; your parents are both veteran revolutionary cadres." If I planned to go on to college, I would have to be both red and expert, she said. The only way to become red was through ideological remolding. "Examine yourself. Perhaps you feel superior because of your family's good political status. That is all the more reason to work hard to remold yourself." Periodically, Teacher Wen would call me back for another gentle reprimand. I began to feel that my family's revolutionary credentials were a burden. Maybe being "born red" was not such an advantage after all.

I became even more certain of this when the school Party committee launched an ideological campaign aimed at students from revolutionary families. It started with the case of the senior student who had failed to get into the Youth League. After he was sent to jail, our school Party secretary, Ding Yi, called an assembly. "This case is a vivid example of how the son of a veteran cadre can degenerate into a criminal!" he declared.

In politics class, Teacher Guo instructed us to search our hearts for inner contradictions. Family origin was important: those of us from good backgrounds had to be certain not to stray from the path, and those from bad backgrounds had to struggle against their inferior inheritance. Yizhong had only a handful of students of "high" antecedents, which included capitalists, landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, rightists, and bad elements. Most students were of "low" origin, meaning their parents were poor or lower-middle peasants, farmhands, workers, or revolutionary cadres. In between were middle and upper-middle peasants, petty proprietors, and intellectuals.

I did not know any real capitalists or even landlords. The "highest students" in class eighty-five were three from an upper-middle-peasant background. The "lowest" was Yuanchao, whose background was both poor peasant and revolutionary cadre. I had once been the same combination. Papa had always told me not to claim revolutionary-cadre status when I was filling in forms because it might bring me privileges I did not deserve, so I would write in only "poor peasant." However, Papa's home village had reclassified his origin to lower-middle peasant not long after I enrolled in Yizhong. The reclassification was part of a movement going on in the countryside, the Four Cleanups. I was upset to lose my "poor peasant" designation. Mama, who came from middle-peasant stock, tried to comfort me by saying poor and lower middle were about the same. But I knew there was a difference. Now I had a double burden: living up to my revolutionary father and living down his lower-middle-peasant status.

Gao Yuan, *from* Born Red. *Mao instituted the Cultural Revolution to cleanse the Chinese Communist Party of dissenters and to inspire its youth with revolutionary fervor. The young Red Guards attacked intellectuals, tried to destroy all things "bourgeois," and splintered into violent factions, all claiming devotion to the one true Mao.*

1853: Villette

LIVE DEMONSTRATION

The first glance informed me that many of the pupils were more than girls—quite young women; I knew that some of them were of noble family (as nobility goes in Labassecour), and I was well convinced that no one amongst them was ignorant of my position in madame's household. As I mounted the *estrade* (a low platform, raised a step above the flooring) where stood the teacher's chair and desk, I beheld opposite to me a row of eyes and brows that threatened stormy weather—eyes full of insolent light, and brows hard and unblushing as marble. The continental female is quite a different being to the insular female of the same age and class: I never saw such eyes and brows in England. Madame Beck introduced me in one cool phrase, sailed from the room, and left me alone in my glory.

I shall never forget that first lesson, nor all the undercurrent of life and character it opened up to me. Then first did I begin rightly to see the wide difference that lies between the novelist's and poet's ideal *jeune fille* and the said *jeune fille* as she really is.

It seems that three titled belles in the first row had sat down predetermined that a *bonne d'enfants* should not give them lessons in English. They knew they had succeeded in expelling obnoxious teachers before now; they knew that madame would at any time throw overboard a *professeur* or *maitresse* who became unpopular with the school, that she never assisted a weak

Reading, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, c. 1890–1895.

official to retain his place—that if he had not strength to fight, or tact to win his way, down he went: looking at Miss Snowe, they promised themselves an easy victory.

Mesdemoiselles Blanche, Virginie, and Angélique opened the campaign by a series of titterings and whisperings; these soon swelled into murmurs and short laughs, which the remoter benches caught up and echoed more loudly. This growing revolt of sixty against one soon became oppressive enough; my command of French being so limited, and exercised under such cruel constraint.

Could I have but spoken in my own tongue, I felt as if I might have gained a hearing; for, in the first place, though I knew I looked a poor creature, and in many respects actually was so, yet nature had given me a voice that could make itself heard, if lifted in excitement or deepened by emotion. In the second place, while I had no flow, only a hesitating trickle of language, in ordinary circumstances yet—under stimulus such as was now rife through the mutinous mass—I could, in English, have rolled out readily phrases stigmatizing their proceedings as such proceedings deserved to be stigmatized; and then with some sarcasm, flavoured with contemptuous bitterness for the ringleaders and relieved with easy banter for the weaker but less knavish followers, it seemed to me that one might possibly get command over this wild herd and bring them into training, at least. All I could now do was to walk up to Blanche—Mademoiselle de Melcy, a young *baronne*—the eldest, tallest, handsomest, and most vicious—stand before her desk, take from under her hand her exercise book, remount the *estrade*, deliberately read the composition, which I found very stupid, and as deliberately, and in the face of the whole school, tear the blotted page in two.

This action availed to draw attention and check noise. One girl alone, quite in the background, persevered in the riot with undiminished energy. I looked at her attentively. She had a pale face, hair like night, broad strong eyebrows, decided features, and a dark, mutinous, sinister eye: I noted that she sat close by a little door, which door, I was well aware, opened into a small closet where books were kept. She was standing up for the purpose of conducting her clamour with freer energies. I measured her stature and calculated her strength. She seemed both tall and wiry; but, so the conflict were brief and the attack unexpected, I thought I might manage her.

Advancing up the room, looking as cool and careless as I possibly could—in short, *ayant l'air de rien*—I slightly pushed the door and found it was ajar. In an instant, and with sharpness, I had turned on her. In another instant she occupied the closet, the door was shut, and the key in my pocket.

It so happened that this girl, Dolores by name and a Catalonian by race, was the sort of character at once dreaded and hated by all her associates. The act of summary justice above noted proved popular: there was not one present but in her heart liked to see it done. They were stilled for a moment. Then a smile—not a laugh—passed from desk to desk; then—when I had gravely and tranquilly returned to the *estrade*, courteously requested silence, and commenced a dictation as if nothing at all had happened—the pens travelled peacefully over the pages, and the remainder of the lesson passed in order and industry.

"*C'est bien*," said Madame Beck when I came out of class, hot and a little exhausted. "*Ça ira*."

She had been listening and peeping through a spy hole the whole time.

From that day I ceased to be nursery governess and became English teacher. Madame raised my salary, but she got thrice the work out of me she had extracted from Mr. Wilson at half the expense.

Charlotte Brontë, *from* Villette. *Working as a teacher and governess in the 1830s to help support her brother's artistic ambitions, Brontë was first published in 1846 in a collection of poems that she and her two sisters, Emily and Anne, wrote under pseudonyms. The Brontë sisters all published first novels in 1847; Charlotte's* Jane Eyre *outsold Emily's* Wuthering Heights *as well as Anne's* Agnes Gray.

c. 412 BC: Athens

MAN ABOUT TOWN

Diogenes was a native of Sinope. On reaching Athens he fell in with Antisthenes. Being repulsed by him, because he never welcomed pupils, by sheer persistence Diogenes wore him out. Once when he stretched out his staff against him, the pupil offered his head with the words, "Strike, for you will find no wood hard enough to keep me away from you, so long as I think you've something to say." From that time forward he was his pupil, and, exile as he was, set out upon a simple life.

The reason why education is usually so poor among women of fashion is that it is not needed for the life which they elect to lead.

—Julia Ward Howe, 1880

He had written to someone to try and procure a cottage for him. When this man was a long time about it, he took for his abode the tub in the Metroon. And in summer he used to roll in it over hot sand, while in winter he used to embrace statues covered with snow, using every means of inuring himself to hardship.

He was great at pouring scorn on his contemporaries. The school of Euclid he called bilious, Plato's lectures a waste of time, the performances at the Dionysia great peep shows for fools, and the demagogues the mob's lackeys. He also used to say that when he saw physicians, philosophers, and pilots at their work, he deemed man the most intelligent of all animals; but when again he saw interpreters of dreams and diviners and those who attended to them, or those who were puffed up with conceit of wealth, he thought no animal more silly.

When one day he was gravely discoursing and nobody attended to him, he began whistling, and as people clustered about him he reproached them with coming in all seriousness to hear nonsense, but slowly and contemptuously when the theme was serious. And he would wonder that the grammarians should investigate the ills of Odysseus while they were ignorant of their own. Or that the musicians should tune the strings of the lyre while leaving the dispositions of their own souls discordant; that the mathematicians should gaze at the sun and the moon but overlook matters close at hand; that the orators should make a fuss about justice in their speeches but never practice it; or that the avaricious should cry out against money while inordinately fond of it.

Menippus tells how, when Diogenes was captured and put up for sale, he was asked what he could do. He replied, "Govern men." And he told the crier to give notice in case anybody wanted to purchase a master for himself. To Xeniades who purchased him he said, "You must obey me, although I am a slave; for, if a physician or a steersman were in slavery, he would be obeyed." This was how he trained the sons of Xeniades. After their other studies he taught them to ride, to shoot with the bow, to sling stones, and to hurl javelins.

The boys used to get by heart many passages from poets, historians, and the writings of Diogenes himself, and he would practice them in every shortcut to a good memory. In the house he taught them to wait upon themselves, and to be content with plain fare and water to drink. He used to make them crop their hair close and to wear it unadorned, and to go lightly clad, barefoot, silent, and not looking about them in the streets. He would also take them out hunting. They on their part had a great regard for Diogenes and made requests of their parents for him.

He used to say that he followed the example of the trainers of choruses, for they too set the note a little high to ensure that the rest should hit the right note.

When he was sunning himself in the Craneum, Alexander the Great came and stood over him and said, "Ask of me any boon you like." To which he replied, "Stand out of my light." Someone had been reading aloud for a very long time, and when he was near

Young pupils practice writing in English, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic at an outdoor school in Central Asia, c. 1950.

the end of the roll pointed to a space with no writing on it. "Cheer up, my men," cried Diogenes, "there's land in sight." To one who by argument had proved conclusively that he had horns, he said, touching his forehead, "Well, I for my part don't see any." In like manner, when somebody declared that there is no such thing as motion, he got up and walked about. When someone was discoursing on celestial phenomena, "How many days," asked Diogenes, "were you in coming from the sky?" A eunuch of bad character had inscribed on his door the words LET NOTHING EVIL ENTER. "How then," Diogenes asked, "is the master of the house to get in?"

Plato had defined man as an animal—biped and featherless—and was applauded. Diogenes plucked a fowl and brought it into the lecture room with the words, "Here is Plato's man." In consequence of which there was added to the definition, "having broad nails." To one who asked what was the proper time for lunch, he said, "If a rich man, when you will; if a poor man, when you can."

He lit a lamp in broad daylight and said, as he went about, "I am looking for a man."

He was loved by the Athenians.

When behaving indecently in the marketplace, he wished it were as easy to relieve hunger by rubbing an empty stomach. Seeing a youth starting off to dine with satraps, he dragged him off, took him to his friends, and bade them keep strict watch over him. When a youth effeminately attired put a question to him, he declined to answer unless he pulled up his robe and showed whether he was man or woman. At a feast certain people kept throwing all the bones to him as they would have done to a dog. Thereupon he played a dog's trick and drenched them.

As Plato was conversing about ideas and using the nouns "tablehood" and "cuphood," Diogenes said, "Table and cup I see; but your tablehood and cuphood, Plato, I can nowise see." "That's readily accounted for," said Plato, "for you have the eyes to see the visible table and cup, but not the understanding by which ideal tablehood and cuphood are discerned."

Being asked what kind of hound he was, he replied, "When hungry, a Maltese; when full, a Molossian—two breeds which most people praise, though for fear of fatigue they do not venture out hunting with them. So neither can you live with me, because you are afraid of the discomforts."

Being asked why people give to beggars but not to philosophers, he said, "Because they think they may one day be lame or blind, but never expect that they will turn to philosophy."

One day observing a youth studying philosophy, he said, "Well done, philosophy, that you divert admirers of bodily charms to the real beauty of the soul."

Alexander once came and stood opposite him and said, "I am Alexander the great king." "And I," said he, "am Diogenes the Cynic." Being asked what he had done to be called a hound, he said, "I fawn on those who give me anything, I yelp at those who refuse, and I set my teeth in rascals."

On being asked what he had gained from philosophy, he replied, "This at least, if nothing else—to be prepared for every fortune." Asked where he came from, he said, "I am a citizen of the world." Certain parents were sacrificing to the gods, that a son might be born to them. "But," said he, "do you not sacrifice to ensure what manner of man he shall turn out to be?"

To the man who said to him, "You don't know anything, although you are a philosopher," he replied, "Even if I am but a pretender to wisdom, that in itself is philosophy." When someone brought a child to him and declared him to be highly gifted and of excellent character, "What need then," said Diogenes, "has he of me?"

Diogenes Laertius, *from* Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers. *Diogenes Laertius wrote his* Lives *during the third century, borrowing from both Greek and Latin accounts. Along with the biography of Diogenes the Cynic, it also presents the lives of, among others, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle.*

Sunday school at the Cooper School in Milburn, Custer County, Nebraska, 1888.

1838: London

CHARLES DICKENS TRAINS A THIEF

When the breakfast was cleared away, the merry old gentleman and the two boys played at a very curious and uncommon game, which was performed in this way. The merry old gentleman, placing a snuffbox in one pocket of his trousers, a notecase in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat pocket, with a guard chain round his neck, and sticking a mock-diamond pin in his shirt, buttoned his coat tight round him; and putting his spectacle case and handkerchief in his pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in which old gentlemen walk about the streets any hour in the day. Sometimes he stopped at the fireplace and sometimes at the door, making believe that he was staring with all his might into shop windows. At such times, he would look constantly round him for fear of thieves, and keep slapping all his pockets in turn to see that he hadn't lost anything in such a very funny and natural manner that Oliver laughed till the tears ran down his face. All this time, the two boys followed him closely about, getting out of his sight so nimbly every time he turned round that it was impossible to follow their motions. At last, the Artful Dodger trod upon his toes or ran upon his boot accidentally, while Charley Bates stumbled up against him behind; and in that one moment they took from him, with the most extraordinary rapidity, snuffbox, notecase, watch guard, chain, shirt pin, pocket handkerchief, even the spectacle case. If the old gentleman felt a hand in any one of his pockets, he cried out where it was; and then the game began all over again.

At length, Charley Bates expressed his opinion that it was time to pad the hoof. This, it occurred to Oliver, must be French for going out; for directly afterward, the Dodger and Charley went away together, having been kindly furnished by the amiable old Jew with money to spend.

"There, my dear," said Fagin. "That's a pleasant life, isn't it? They have gone out for the day."

"Have they done work, sir?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes," said the Jew, "that is, unless they should unexpectedly come across any when they are out; and they won't neglect it if they do, my dear, depend upon it. Make 'em your models, my dear. Make 'em your models," said the Jew, tapping the fire shovel on the hearth to add force to his words, "do everything they bid you, and take their advice in all matters—especially the Dodger's, my dear. He'll be a great man himself, and will make you one too, if you take pattern by him. Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?" said the Jew, stopping short.

> *By educating the young generation along the right lines, the People's State will have to see to it that a generation of mankind is formed which will be adequate to this supreme combat that will decide the destinies of the world.*
>
> *—Adolf Hitler, 1925*

"Yes, sir," said Oliver.

"See if you can take it out without my feeling it, as you saw them do when we were at play this morning."

Oliver held up the bottom of the pocket with one hand, as he had seen the Dodger hold it, and drew the handkerchief lightly out of it with the other.

"Is it gone?" cried the Jew.

"Here it is, sir," said Oliver, showing it in his hand.

"You're a clever boy, my dear," said the playful old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head approvingly. "I never saw a sharper lad. Here's a shilling for you. If you go on in this way, you'll be the greatest man of the time. And now come here, and I'll show you how to take the marks out of the handkerchiefs."

Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman's pocket in play had to do with his chances of being a great man. But, thinking that the Jew, being so much his senior, must know best, he followed him quietly to the table, and was soon deeply involved in his new study.

For many days, Oliver remained in the Jew's room, picking the marks out of the pocket handkerchiefs (of which a great number were brought home), and sometimes taking part in the game already described, which the two boys and the Jew played, regularly, every morning. At length, he began to languish for the fresh air, and took many occasions of earnestly entreating the old gentleman to allow him to go out to work with his two companions.

The three boys sallied out: the Dodger with his coat sleeves tucked up and his hat cocked, as usual; Master Bates sauntering along with his hands in his pockets; and Oliver between them, wondering where they were going and what branch of manufacture he would be instructed in first. The pace at which they went was such a very lazy, ill-looking saunter that Oliver soon began to think his companions were going to deceive the old gentleman by not going to work at all. They were just emerging from a narrow court not far from the open square in Clerkenwell, when the Dodger made a sudden stop, and laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again with the greatest caution and circumspection.

"What's the matter?" demanded Oliver.

"Hush!" replied the Dodger. "Do you see that old cove at the bookstall?"

"The old gentleman over the way?" said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."

"He'll do," said the Dodger.

"A prime plant," observed Master Charley Bates.

The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles. He was dressed in a bottle-green coat with a black velvet collar, wore white trousers, and carried a smart bamboo cane under his arm. He had taken up a book from the stall, and there he stood, reading away as hard as if he were in his elbow chair in his own study. It is very possible that he fancied himself there, indeed; for it was plain, from his utter abstraction, that he saw not the bookstall, nor the street, nor the boys, nor, in short, anything but the book itself—which he was reading straight through, turning over the leaf when he got to the bottom of a page, beginning at the top line of the next one, and going regularly on with the greatest interest and eagerness.

What was Oliver's horror and alarm as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eyelids as wide open as they would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into the old gentleman's pocket and draw from thence a handkerchief! To see him hand the same to Charley Bates, and finally to behold them both running away round the corner at full speed!

In an instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs, and the watches, and the jewels, and the Jew, rushed upon the boy's mind. He stood, for a moment, with the blood so tingling through all his veins from terror that he felt as if he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he took to his heels and, not knowing what he did, made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground.

From Oliver Twist. *Dickens' formal education ended at the age of fifteen in 1827. He found work as a clerk in a solicitor's office and a court stenographer before almost becoming a professional actor in 1832. One of the greatest and most prolific authors of the Victorian era, Dickens oversaw the serial publication of* Oliver Twist *in the monthly magazine he edited,* Bentley's Miscellany.

Modern Apprenticeships

Average years spent training for accreditation or certification

Funeral home director	2–4 years
Construction worker	2–4 years
Lawyer (post-B.A.)	3 years
Lineman	4 years
Plumber	4–5 years
Philosopher (post-B.A.)	5–6 years
Banknote engraver	7 years
Jesuit priest	8–13 years
Neurosurgeon (post-B.A.)	10–12 years
Psychoanalyst (post-B.A.)	10–15 years

c. 1952: Ueda

BABY MOZART

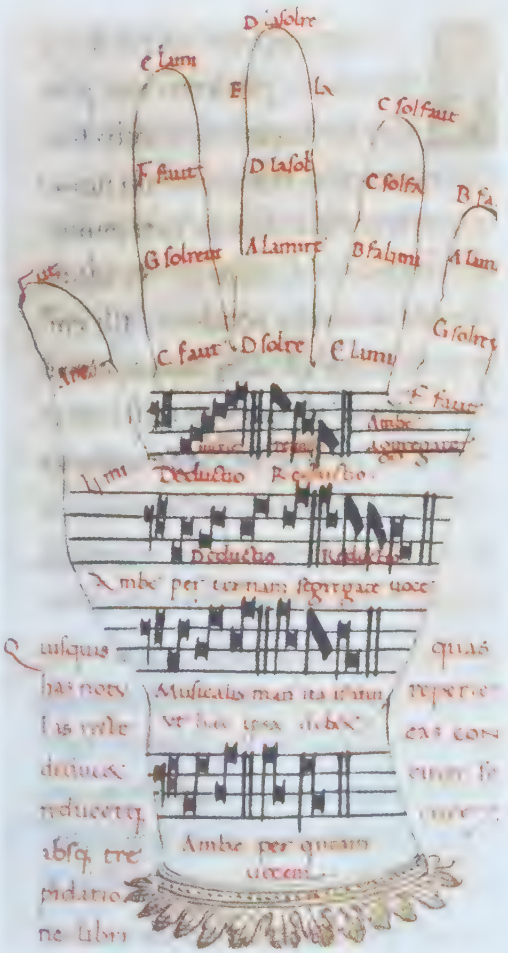
The children of Mrs. Shimada and Mrs. Kiuchi came in holding their small violins. "Well, shall we have some music?" someone suggested, and, as always, the children happily began to play the various pieces in unison and gave a concert. Just in front of me sat Mrs. Kiuchi, holding a baby in her arms. I inquired its age and was told that the infant, named Hiromi, was just five months old. Hiromi's sister, Atsumi, six years old, was daily practicing at that time the Vivaldi A-minor concerto, as well as listening to the record every day. So Hiromi grew up hearing this music daily from the beginning. I was anxious to know what effect this had on a five-month-old baby, so I announced that I would like to play something and stood up with my violin. When everybody was quiet, I started playing a minuet by Bach. While I played, my eyes did not leave Hiromi's face. The five month old already knew the sound of the violin well, and her eyes shone while she listened to this piece that she was hearing for the first time. A little while later I switched from the minuet to the Vivaldi A-minor concerto—music that was played and heard continuously in her home. I had no sooner started the piece when an amazing thing happened.

Hiromi's expression suddenly changed. She smiled and laughed, and turned her happy face to her mother, who held her in her arms. "See—that's *my* music," she unmistakably wanted to tell her mother. Soon again, her face turned in my direction and she moved her body up and down in rhythm. This baby, just five months old, had shown that she knew the melody of the Vivaldi A-minor concerto. In this way, inspiration and interest are acquired involuntarily by an infant from everything he sees and hears, like a seed that is planted. This is what molds—forms—the character. That, I thought, was clear from what I had seen. It is a frightening fact. By no means only words or music, but everything, good or bad, is absorbed.

Four years later at a big concert in Matsumoto, there were 150 children on the stage with their small violins. They were playing the Vivaldi A-minor concerto. "Who is that four or five-year-old girl in the center of the front row?" I asked. This child was putting her whole heart and soul into her playing, and her posture was excellent as she happily swayed with the rhythm. "That is Hiromi Kiuchi from Ueda." It was the same child. Indeed, I remembered the five-month-old baby taking real pleasure in natural training, and there she was with her ability nicely developed.

It takes a great deal of artistic sense to write poetry and music. Remembering the baby held in its mother's arms listening to my playing of the Vivaldi concerto and joyfully matching the

Guidonian hand, a method of teaching singers to read music developed by Guido d'Arezzo, eleventh century.



A music lesson depicted in a Roman wall painting from Herculaneum, first century.

rhythm with the movements of her body, I am convinced that this beautiful talent and admirable humanity were trained by the method the parents used for her education. Atsumi and Hiromi, born ordinary children, were indeed fortunate to be reared like this.

Every single human being's personality—his ability, his way of thinking and feeling—is carved and chiseled by training and environment. It shows in each person's face and eyes. His whole character becomes visible. The stamp of history changes day by day, matching the steps of man's living. This is life's delicate working.

Mothers often say to me, "I am tone-deaf," to explain that their child is the same. They think it is hereditary and that there is nothing they can do about it. But just as nightingales are not born tone-deaf, neither are human infants. On the contrary, a baby absorbs perfectly any out-of-tune pitch of its mother's lullabies. It has a marvelous ear. That's why the child will later sing in the same way. Osaka children absorb the intricate Osaka dialect in exactly the same fashion.

If a baby is brought up listening to a recording of a song out of tune, his ears will become accustomed to it, and it will be very hard for him to change later on. Thus, if we wanted to, we could make all children throughout the world tone-deaf. But it is clear that if we can do this, there is no such thing as intrinsic musical talent. This fact needs to be understood. We need to understand the importance of the ear.

Shinichi Suzuki, *from* Nurtured by Love. *Suzuki went to Germany in 1921 at the age of twenty-two to further his study of the violin; Albert Einstein acted as his guardian. He returned to Japan in 1928 and after World War II helped found a musical school at Matsumoto, where he developed a method whereby music is learned through hearing, not reading.*

c. 1915: Jackson

MOONLIGHT

My love for the alphabet, which endures, grew out of reciting it but before that, out of seeing the letters on the page. In my own storybooks, before I could read them for myself, I fell in love with various winding, enchanted-looking initials drawn by Walter Crane at the heads of fairy tales. In "Once upon a time," an "O" had a rabbit running it as a treadmill, his feet upon flowers. When the day came years later for me to see the Book of Kells, all the wizardry of letter, initial, and word swept over me a thousand times over, and the illumination, the gold, seemed a part of the word's beauty and holiness that had been there from the start.

Learning stamps you with its moments. Childhood's learning is made up of moments. It isn't steady. It's a pulse.

In a children's art class, we sat in a ring on kindergarten chairs and drew three daffodils that had just been picked out of the yard; and while I was drawing, my sharpened yellow pencil and the cup of the yellow daffodil gave off whiffs just alike. That the pencil doing the drawing should give off the same smell as the flower it drew seemed part of the art lesson—as shouldn't it be? Children, like animals, use all their senses to discover the world. Then artists come along and discover it the same way, all over again. Here and there, it's the same world. Or now and then we'll hear from an artist who's never lost it.

In my sensory education I include my physical awareness of the *word*. Of a certain word, that is: the connection it has with what it stands for. At around age six, perhaps, I was standing by myself in our front yard waiting for supper, just at that hour in a late summer day when the sun is already below the horizon and the risen full moon in the visible sky stops being chalky and begins to take on light. There comes the moment, and I saw it then, when the moon goes from flat to round. For the first time it met my eyes as a globe. The word "moon" came into my mouth as though fed to me out of a silver spoon. Held in my mouth the moon became a word. It had the roundness of a Concord grape grandpa took off his vine and gave me to suck out of its skin and swallow whole, in Ohio.

This love did not prevent me from living for years in foolish error about the moon. The new moon just appearing in the west was the rising moon to me. The new should be rising. And in early childhood the sun and moon, those opposite reigning powers, I just as easily assumed rose in east and west respectively in their opposite sides of the sky, and like partners in a reel they advanced: sun from the east, moon from the west, crossed over (when I wasn't looking), and went down on the other side. My father couldn't have known I believed that when, bending behind me and guiding my shoulder, he positioned me at our telescope in the front yard and, with careful adjustment of the focus, brought the moon close to me.

The night sky over my childhood Jackson was velvety black. I could see the full constellations in it and call their names; when I could read, I knew their myths. Though I was always waked for eclipses, and indeed carried to the window as an infant in arms and shown Halley's Comet in my sleep, and though I'd been taught at our dining-room table about the solar system and knew the earth revolved around the sun and our moon around us, I never found out the moon didn't come up in the west until I was a writer and Herschel Brickell, the literary critic, told me after I misplaced it in a story. He said valuable words to me about my new profession: "Always be sure you get your moon in the right part of the sky."

Eudora Welty, *from* One Writer's Beginnings. *Welty was a prolific author who wrote mainly about the American South, winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1973 for her novella* The Optimist's Daughter. *From the age of sixteen until her death at the age of ninety-two, she continually returned to the same house that her family had built in Jackson, Mississippi.*

1887: Alabama

THE LIVING WORD

The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrast between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

On the afternoon of that eventful day I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother's signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet Southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding line and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was. "Light! Give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Someone took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and more than all things else, to love me.

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l." I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them "pin," "hat," "cup," and a few verbs like "sit," "stand," and "walk." But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.

One day while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-l-l," and tried to make me understand that "d-o-l-l" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is "mug" and that "w-a-t-e-r" is "water," but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word "water," first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as

of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy—set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that "mother," "father," "sister," "teacher" were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me, "like Aaron's rod, with flowers." It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.

Helen Keller, *from* The Story of My Life. *Rendered deaf, blind, and mute by a virus as an infant, Keller at the age of six was examined by Alexander Graham Bell, who helped to arrange her study under Anne Sullivan. She published her* Story *in 1903, graduated from Radcliffe College in 1904, and in 1913, began lecturing on blindness around the world. In the 1920s she and Sullivan toured America in a vaudeville show during which time she befriended Harpo Marx and Charlie Chaplin.*

Woman in Blue Reading a Letter (detail), by Jan Vermeer, c. 1662–1665.

PRODUCT & BYPRODUCT

2000: Shepherdstown

ALTERNATIVE HISTORY

Civilization woozed out of the Nile about 300,000 years ago. The Nile was a river that had some water in it. Every year it would flood and irritate the land. Mesapatamia was squigged in a valley near the Eucaliptus river. Flooding was erotic. Judyism was the first monolithic religion. Old Testament profits include Moses, Amy, and Confucius, who believed in Fidel Piety. Moses was told by Jesus Christ to lead the people out of Egypt into the Sahara Desert. The Book of Exodus describes this trip and the amazing things that happened on it, including the Ten Commandments, various special effects, and the building of the Suez Canal. David was a fictional character in the Bible who faught with Gilgamesh while wearing a sling. He pleased the people with his many erections and saved them from attacks by the Philipines.

Helen of Troy launched a thousand ships with her face. The Trojan War raged between the Greeks and the Tories. We know about this thanks to Homer's story about Ulysses Grant and Iliad, the painful wife he left behind. King Xerox of Persia invaded Greace, but fell off short at the battle of Thermosalami. Alexander the Great conquered Persia, Egypt, and Japan. Sadly, he died with no hairs. Religion was polyphonic. Featured were gods such as Herod, Mars, and Juice.

The Greeks were important at culture and science. Plato invented reality. The Sophists justified themselves by changing relatives whenever this needed to be done. Lust was a must for the Epicureans. U. Clid proved that there is more than one side to every plain. Pythagasaurus fathered the triangle. Archimedes made the first steamboat and power drill.

Rome was founded sometime by Uncle Remus and Wolf. Roman upperclassmen demanded to be known as Patricia. Senators wore purple tubas as a sign of respect. Spartacus led a slave revolt and later was in a movie about this. The Roman Republic was bothered by intestinal wars. Cesar inspired his men by stating, "I came, I saw, I went." He was assinated on the Yikes of March, when he is reported to have said, "Me too, Brutus!"

Adam and Eve (detail), by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1528.

Medeval society was arranged like a tree, with your nobles in the upper twigs and your pesants grubbing around the roots. This was known as the manurial system, where land was passed through fathers to sons by primogenuflecture. Power belonged to a patriarchy empowering all genders except the female. Nuns, for example, were generally women. In the early part of the Middle Ages female nuns were free to commit random acts of contrition and redemption. Later they were forcibly enclustered in harems. Russia was run over by Batu Cohen and crushed under the Mongol yolk. Certain tribes of India practiced voodoo innuendo. The Crusades, meanwhile, enlarged opportunities for travel.

The period of a [Persian] boy's education is between the ages of five and twenty, and he is taught three things only: to ride, to use the bow, and to speak the truth.

—Herodotus, c. 440 BC

Historians today feel that the renaissance was the result of medevil people being fertalized by events. Italy was pregnent with huge ideas and great men. Machiavelli, who was often unemployed, wrote *The Prince* to get a job with Richard Nixon. Ivan the Terrible started life as a child, a fact that troubled his later personality. This was a time when Europeans felt the need to reach out and smack someone. Ferdinand and Isabella conquered Granola, a part of Spain now known as Mexico and the Gulf States. Columbus came to America in order to install rule by dead white males over the native peoples.

The French Revolution was like a tractor. It gave people the understanding that you need change in order to make tracks in the world. The Third Estate was locked out of its motel and had to do its business on a tennis court. Another problem was that France was full of French people. Revolters demanded liberty, equality, and fraternities. Fraternity breeded pride in the nation and therefore thicker political boundaries. In 1799, Napoleon performed a coo. Napoleon fertilized all his life.

The Industrial Revolution was slow at first due to the lack of factories. Great progress was made through the introduction of self-acting mules. Telephones were not available—communication went by mouth to mouth or telegram. The airplane was invented and first flown by the Marx brothers. The social structure was Upper Class, Middle Class, Working Class, and Lowest Poor Scum. Nobles claimed to be descended from better jeans. British paternalists were motivated by "noblesse oblique." Certain members of the lower middle class exhibited boudoir pretensions. The slums became brooding grounds for lower-class unrest.

Prostitution, considered to be the world's oldest profession, got its beginnings in the nineteenth century. Sex in this period was a very quiet ordeal. Feminists argued that sex outside the family would make you go blind or lose your memory. Leaders of the women's movement included Florence Nightengail, Susan B. Anthony, and Crystal Pancake.

Most English believed in the missionary position. Admiral Dewey sank the Spanish Armada in Vanilla Bay. The Russo-Japanese War exploded between Japan and Italy. The German takeover of All-Sauce Lorrain enraged the French, who clamored for vendetta. In 1914, the assignation of Archduke Ferdman gave sweet relief to the mounting tensions.

When the Davy Jones Index crashed in 1929 many people were left to political incineration. Some, like John Paul Sart, retreated into extraterrestrialism. Hitler believed in a Panned Germany and therefore insisted that Czechoslavia release the Sedated Germans into his care. England's rulers vanely hoped for "peas in our time" but were completed foddled by Hitler. Lennon ruled in Russia. When he died, the U.S.S.R. was run by a five-man triumpherate—Stalin, Lenin, Trotsky, Menshevik, and Buchanan. Stalin expanded capitalism by building machine tractor stations. When things didn't go as planned, he used the peasants as escape goats.

Few were surprised when the National League failed to prevent another world war. The perverbial chickens laid by the poor peace treaties after World War I all came home to roast. Japan boomed Pearl Harbor, the main U.S. base in Southern California. The Allies landed near Italy's toe and gradually advanced up her leg. Stalin, Rosevelt, Churchill, and Truman were known as "The Big Three." Hitler, who had become depressed for some reason, crawled under Berlin. Here he had his wife Evita put to sleep and then shot himself in the bonker.

World War II became the Cold War, because Benjamin Franklin Roosevelt did not trust Lenin and Stalin. An ironed curtin fell across the haunches of Europe. Berlin was airlifted westward and divided into pieces. Israel was founded despite the protests of local Arabs known as Zionists. The Marsha Plan put Europe back together with help from Konrad Adenauer, a French leader whose efforts led to the creation of the Communist Market.

The U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. became global in power, but Europe remained incontinent. Wars fought in the 1950s and after include the Crimean War, Vietnam, and the Six-Minute War. President John F. Kennedy worked closely with the Russians to solve the Canadian Missile Crisis. Yugoslavia's Toto became a non-eventualist Communist. Hochise Min mounted the power curve in Viet Nam. Castro led a coupe in Cuba and shocked many by wiggling his feelers every time there was trouble in Latin America. This required the United Stares to middle in selected bandana republics during the 1960s. Mentally speaking, Russia had to reinvent itself. Gorbachev became top Russian after the death of Leoned Bolshevik.

The historicle period ended shortly after World War II–III. We, in all humidity, are the people of currant times. This concept grinds our critical, seething minds to a halt.

Anders Henriksson, *from "A History of the Past, Part II," originally published in the Winter 2000 issue of* The Wilson Quarterly. *Henriksson, a professor of history at Shepherd College, compiled the essay from sentences extracted from students' papers over a fifteen-year period.*

The Schoolboy (Camille Roulin), by Vincent van Gogh, 1888.

1837: Cambridge

MAN THINKING

The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around, brooded thereon, gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him life; it went out from him truth. It came to him short-lived actions; it went out from him immortal thoughts. It came to him business; it went from him poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires. Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing.

In This Year's Graduating Class...

Famous classmates

1964: Yale University
John Ashcroft
Joseph Lieberman
Richard Serra

1950: Harvard University
Robert Bly
Edward Gorey
Frank O'Hara
Henry Kissinger

1846: United States Military Academy
Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson
George Brinton McClellan
George Pickett*

1825: Bowdoin College
Nathaniel Hawthorne
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

1793: University of Tübingen
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
Friedrich Hölderlin

c. 77 BC: Rhodes School of Rhetoric
Marcus Tullius Cicero
Julius Caesar

c. 410 BC: Agora of Socrates
Plato
Xenophon

Graduated last in his class

Or, I might say, it depends on how far the process had gone of transmuting life into truth. In proportion to the completeness of the distillation, so will the purity and imperishableness of the product be. But none is quite perfect. As no air pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book, or write a book of pure thought that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a remote posterity as to contemporaries, or rather to the second age. Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, is transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled the book is perfect, as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it and makes an outcry if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking—by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon have given—forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books.

Hence, instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm. Hence the book-learned class who value books as such: not as related to nature and the human constitution, but as making a sort of third estate with the world and the soul. Hence the restorers of readings, the emendators, the bibliomaniacs of all degrees.

Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means go

to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire. I had better never see a book than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world of value is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although in almost all men obstructed and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth and utters truth, or creates. In this action it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. In its essence it is progressive. The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind stop with some past utterance of genius. "This is good," they say, "let us hold by this." They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hind-head. Man hopes; genius creates. Whatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux of the deity is not his—cinders and smoke there may be, but not yet flame. There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words: manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair.

Undoubtedly there is a right way of reading, so it be sternly subordinated. Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings. But when the intervals of darkness come, as come they must—when the sun is hid and the stars withdraw their shining—we repair to the lamps which were kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the east again, where the dawn is. We hear, that we may speak. The Arabian proverb says, "A fig tree, looking on a fig tree, becometh fruitful."

It is remarkable, the character of the pleasure we derive from the best books. They impress us with the conviction that one nature wrote and the same reads. We read the verses of one of the great English poets, of Chaucer, of Marvell, of Dryden, with the most modern joy—with a pleasure, I mean, which is in great part caused by the abstraction of all *time* from their verses. There is some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise, when this poet who lived in some past world two or three hundred years ago says that which lies close to my own soul, that which I also had well-nigh thought and said. But for the evidence thence afforded to the philosophical doctrine of the identity of all minds, we should suppose some preestablished harmony, some foresight of souls that were to be, and some preparation of stores for their future wants, like the fact observed in insects, who lay up food before death for the young grub they shall never see.

I would not be hurried by any love of system, by any exaggeration of instincts, to underrate the book. We all know that as the human body can be nourished on any food, though it were boiled grass and the broth of shoes, so the human mind can be fed by any knowledge. And great and heroic men have existed who had almost no other information than by the printed page. I only would say that it needs a strong head to bear that diet. One must be an inventor to read well. As the proverb says, "He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry out the wealth of the Indies." There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world. We then see what is always true: that as the seer's hour of vision is short and rare among heavy days and months, so is its record, perchance, the least part of his volume. The discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakespeare, only that least part—only the authentic utterances of the oracle—all the rest he rejects, were it never so many times Plato's and Shakespeare's.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *from "The American Scholar." Emerson delivered a version of the essay that Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. later termed the American "intellectual Declaration of Independence" to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard. A year earlier, in 1836, he had published anonymously his book* Nature, *which helped initiate the Transcendentalist movement.*

c. 64: Rome

MISSION STATEMENT

You want to know my attitude toward liberal studies. Well, I have no respect for any study whatsoever if its end is the making of money. Such studies are to me unworthy ones. They involve the putting out of skills to hire, and are only of value insofar as they may develop the mind without occupying it for long. Time should be spent on them only so long as one's mental abilities are not up to dealing with higher things. They are our apprenticeship, not our real work. Why "liberal studies" are so called is obvious: it is because they are the ones considered worthy of a free man. But there is really only one liberal study that deserves the name—because it makes a person free—and that is the pursuit of wisdom. Its high ideals, its steadfastness, and spirit make all other studies puerile and puny in comparison.

Singing Lesson, by Mai-Thu (1906–1980).

The question has sometimes been posed whether these liberal studies make a man a better person. But in fact they do not aspire to any knowledge of how to do this, let alone claim to do it. Literary scholarship concerns itself with research into language, or history if a rather broader field is preferred, or, extending its range to the very limit, poetry. Which of these paves the way to virtue? Attentiveness to words, analysis of syllables, accounts of myths, laying down the principles of prosody? What is there in all this that dispels fear, roots out desire, or reins in passion? Or let us take a look at music, at geometry; you will not find anything in them which tells us not to be afraid of this or desire that—and if anyone lacks this kind of knowledge all his other knowledge is valueless to him. The question is whether or not that sort of scholar is teaching virtue. For if he is not, he will not even be imparting it incidentally. If he is teaching it, he is a philosopher. If you really want to know how far these persons are from the position of being moral teachers, observe the absence of connection between all the things they study; if they were teaching one and the same thing a connection would be evident. Unless perhaps they manage to persuade you that Homer was actually a philosopher—though they refute their case by means of the very passages which lead them to infer it. For at one moment they make him a Stoic, giving nothing but virtue his approval, steering clear of pleasure, not even an offer of immortality inducing him to stoop to the dishonorable; at another they make him an Epicurean, praising the way of life of a society passing its days at peace and ease in an atmosphere of dinner parties and music making; at another he becomes a Peripatetic, with a three-fold classification of things good; at another an Academic, stating that nothing is certain. It is obvi-

ous that none of these philosophies is to be found in Homer for the very reason that they all are, the doctrines being mutually incompatible. Even suppose we grant these people that Homer was a philosopher: he became a wise man, surely, before he could recite any epics, so that what we should be learning are the things which made him wise. Are you more concerned to find out where Ulysses' wanderings took him than to find a way of putting an end to our own perpetual wanderings? We haven't the time to spare to hear whether it was between Italy and Sicily that he ran into a storm or somewhere outside the area of the world we know—wanderings as extensive as his could never in fact have taken place inside so limited an area—when every day we're running into our own storms, spiritual storms, and driven by vice into all the troubles that Ulysses ever knew. We're not spared those eye-distracting beauties, or attackers. We too have to contend in various places with savage monsters reveling in human blood, insidious voices that beguile our ears, shipwrecks, and all manner of misfortune. What you should be teaching me is how I may attain such a love for my country, my father, and my wife, and keep on course for those ideals even after shipwreck. Why go into the question whether or not Penelope completely took in her contemporaries and was far from being a model of wifely purity, any more than the question whether or not she had a feeling that the man she was looking at was Ulysses before she actually knew it? Teach me instead what purity is, how much value there is in it, whether it lies in the body or in the mind.

Turning to the musical scholar, I say this. You teach me how bass and treble harmonize, or how strings producing different notes can give rise to concord. I would rather you brought about some harmony in my mind and got my thoughts into tune. You show me which are the plaintive keys. I would rather you showed me how to avoid uttering plaintive notes when things go against me in life.

The geometrician teaches me how to work out the size of my estates rather than how to work out how much a man needs in order to have enough. He teaches me to calculate, putting my fingers into the service of avarice, instead of teaching me that there is no point whatsoever in that sort of computation and that a person is none the happier for having properties which tire accountants out, or to put it another way: how superfluous a man's possessions are when he would be a picture of misery if you forced him to start counting up single-handed how much he possessed. What use is it to me to be able to divide a piece of land into equal areas if I'm unable to divide it with a brother? What use is the ability to measure out a portion of an acre with an accuracy extending even to the bits which elude the measuring rod if I'm upset when some high-handed neighbor encroaches slightly on my property? The geometrician teaches me how I may avoid losing any fraction of my estates, but what I really want to learn is how to lose the lot and still keep smiling. "But I'm being turned off the land my father and grandfather owned before me!" Well, so what? Who owned the land before your grandfather? The legal experts say that acquisition by prescription never applies where the property concerned is actually public property. Well, what you possess and call your own is really public property, or mankind's property for that matter. Oh, the marvels of geometry! You geometers can calculate the area of circles, can reduce any given shape to a square, can state the distances separating stars. Nothing's outside your scope when it comes to measurement. Well, if you're such an expert, measure a man's soul; tell me how large or how small that is. You can define a straight line; what use is that to you if you've no idea what straightness means in life?

> *Give us the child for eight years and it will be a Bolshevist forever.*
>
> *—Vladimir Lenin, 1923*

Seneca, *from* Letters from a Stoic. *Philosopher, statesman, and tragedian, Seneca began his career of politics and law in Rome in the early 30s. He served as tutor to the young Nero in the 50s. Implicated in a conspiracy to overthrow the emperor in 65, he was ordered to commit suicide.*

1874: Schaffhausen

CROSSING THE STREAM

A traveler who had seen many lands and peoples and several of the earth's continents was asked what quality in men he had discovered everywhere he had gone. He replied, "They have a tendency to laziness." To many it will seem that he ought rather to have said, "They are all timid. They hide themselves behind customs and opinions." In his heart every man knows quite well that, being unique, he will be in the world only once and that no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a unity so strangely variegated an assortment as he is: he knows but he hides it like a bad conscience—why? From fear of his neighbor, who demands conventionality and cloaks himself with it. But what is it that constrains the individual to fear his neighbor, to think and act like a member of a herd, and to have no joy in himself? Modesty, perhaps, in a few rare cases. With the great majority it is indolence, inertia: in short, that tendency to laziness of which the traveler spoke. He is right: men are even lazier than they are timid, and fear most of all the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden them. Artists alone hate this sluggish promenading in borrowed fashions and appropriated opinions, and they reveal everyone's secret bad conscience, the law that every man is a unique miracle; they dare to show us man as he is, uniquely himself to every last movement of his muscles; more, that in being thus strictly consistent in uniqueness he is beautiful, and worth regarding, and in no way tedious. When the great thinker despises mankind, he despises its laziness: for it is on account of their laziness that men seem like factory products, things of no consequence and unworthy to be associated with or instructed. The man who does not wish to belong to the mass needs only to cease taking himself easily; let him follow his conscience, which calls to him, "Be your self! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself."

Every youthful soul hears this call day and night, and trembles when he hears it; for the idea of its liberation gives it a presentiment of the measure of happiness allotted it from all eternity—a happiness to which it can by no means attain so long as it lies fettered by the chains of fear and convention. And how dismal and senseless life can be without this liberation! There exists no more repulsive and desolate creature in the world than the man who has evaded his genius and who now looks furtively to left and right, behind him and all about him. In the end such a man becomes impossible to get hold of, since he is wholly exterior, without kernel: a tattered,

Elizabeth Eckford, one of the the first nine black students admitted to Little Rock Central High School, is harassed on her first day, 1957.

painted bag of clothes, a decked-out ghost that cannot inspire even fear and certainly not pity.

We are responsible to ourselves for our own existence. Consequently we want to be the true helmsman of this existence and refuse to allow our existence to resemble a mindless act of chance. One has to take a somewhat bold and dangerous line with this existence, especially as, whatever happens, we are bound to lose it. Why go on clinging to this clod of earth, this way of life, why pay heed to what your neighbor says? It is so parochial to bind oneself to views which are no longer binding even a couple of hundred miles away. Orient and Occident are chalk lines drawn before us to fool our timidity. I will make an attempt to attain freedom, the youthful soul says to itself; and is it to be hindered in this by the fact that two nations happen to hate and fight one another, or that two continents are separated by an ocean, or that all around it a religion is taught which did not yet exist a couple of thousand years ago? All that is not you, it says to itself. No one can construct for you the bridge upon which precisely you must cross the stream of life, no one but you yourself alone. There are, to be sure, countless paths and bridges and demigods which would bear you through this stream, but only at the cost of yourself: you would put yourself in pawn and lose yourself. There exists in the world a single path along which no one can go except you. Whither does it lead? Do not ask, go along it. Who was it who said, "A man never rises higher than when he does not know whither his path can still lead him"?

But how can we find ourselves again? How can man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled; and if the hare has seven skins, man can slough off seventy times seven and still not be able to say, "This is really you, this is no longer the outer shell." Moreover, it is a painful and dangerous undertaking thus to tunnel into oneself and to force one's way down into the shaft of one's being by the nearest path. A man who does it can easily so hurt himself that no physician can cure him. And what need should there be for it, since everything bears witness to what we are, our friendships and enmities, our glance and the clasp of our hand, our memory and that which we do not remember, our books and our handwriting. This is the means by which an inquiry into the most important aspect can be initiated: let the youthful soul look back on life with the question, "What have you truly loved up to now, what has drawn your soul aloft, what has mastered it and at the same time blessed it?" Set up these revered objects before you and perhaps their nature and their sequence will give you a law, the fundamental law of your own true self. Compare these objects one with another, see how one completes, expands, surpasses, transfigures another, how they constitute a stepladder upon which you have clambered up to yourself as you are now; for your true nature lies not concealed deep within you but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be. Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is, something in itself ineducable and in any case difficult of access, bound and paralyzed. Your educators can be only your liberators.

And that is the secret of all culture: it does not provide artificial limbs, wax noses, or spectacles—that which can provide these things is only sham education. Culture is liberation: the removal of all the weeds, rubble, and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant; an outstreaming of light and warmth; the gentle rustling of nocturnal rain. It is imitation and worship of nature where nature is in her motherly and merciful mood; it is the perfecting of nature when it deflects her cruel and merciless assaults and turns them to good, and when it draws a veil over the expressions of nature's stepmotherly mood and her sad lack of understanding.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *from* Schopenhauer as Educator. *As a student at the University of Leipzig in the 1860s, Nietzsche met the composer Richard Wagner, to whom in 1872 he dedicated his first book,* The Birth of Tragedy. *After teaching intermittently at the University of Basel, Nietzsche spent ten years in near isolation publishing* Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Beyond Good and Evil, *and* On the Genealogy of Morals.

1390: London

GENTLEMAN AND SCHOLAR

An Oxford cleric, still a student though,
One who had taken logic long ago,
Was there; his horse was thinner than a rake,
And he was not too fat, I undertake,
But had a hollow look, a sober stare;
The thread upon his overcoat was bare.
He had found no preferment in the church
And he was too unworldly to make search
For secular employment. By his bed
He preferred having twenty books in red
And black, of Aristotle's philosophy,
Than costly clothes, fiddle, or psaltery.
Though a philosopher, as I have told,
He had not found the stone for making gold.
Whatever money from his friends he took
He spent on learning or another book
And prayed for them most earnestly, returning
Thanks to them thus for paying for his learning.
His only care was study, and indeed
He never spoke a word more than was need,
Formal at that, respectful in the extreme,
Short, to the point, and lofty in his theme.
A tone of moral virtue filled his speech
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *from* The Canterbury Tales. *Courtier, diplomat, and "the first finder of our language," Chaucer in the 1370s traveled to Italy, where he was influenced by his contemporaries Petrarch and Boccaccio. He died in 1400 without having completed all of the tales he intended to write.*

1914: Princeton

COLLEGE DREAMING

The night mist fell. From the moon it rolled, clustered about the spires and towers, and then settled below them, so that the dreaming peaks were still in lofty aspiration toward the sky. Figures that dotted the day like ants now brushed along as shadowy ghosts, in and out of the foreground. The Gothic halls and cloisters were infinitely more mysterious as they loomed suddenly out of the darkness, outlined each by myriad faint squares of yellow light. Indefinitely from somewhere a bell boomed the quarter-hour, and Amory, pausing by the sundial, stretched himself out full length on the damp grass. The cool bathed his eyes and slowed the flight of time—time that had crept so insidiously through the lazy April afternoons, seemed so intangible in the long spring twilights. Evening after evening the senior singing had drifted over the campus in melancholy beauty, and through the shell of his undergraduate consciousness had broken a deep and reverent devotion to the gray walls and Gothic peaks and all they symbolized as warehouses of dead ages.

The tower that in view of his window sprang upward, grew into a spire, yearning higher until its uppermost tip was half invisible against the morning skies, gave him the first sense of the transiency and unimportance of the campus figures except as holders of the apostolic succession. He liked knowing that Gothic architecture, with its upward trend, was peculiarly appropriate to universities, and the idea became personal to him. The silent stretches of green, the quiet halls with an occasional late-burning scholastic light held his imagination in a strong grasp, and the chastity of the spire became a symbol of this perception.

"Damn it all," he whispered aloud, wetting his hand in the damp and running them through his hair. "Next year I work!" Yet he knew that where now the spirit of spires and towers made him dreamily acquiescent, it would then overawe him. Where now he realized only his own inconsequence, effort would make him aware of his own impotency and insufficiency.

The college dreamed on—awake. He felt a nervous excitement that might have been the very throb of its slow heart. It was a stream where he was to throw a stone whose faint ripple would be vanishing almost as it left his hand. As yet he had given nothing, he had taken nothing.

A belated freshman, his oilskin slicker rasping loudly, slushed along the soft path. A voice from somewhere called the inevitable formula—"Stick out your head!"—below an unseen window. A hundred little sounds of the current drifting on under the fog pressed in finally on his consciousness.

> *A school without grades must have been concocted by someone who was drunk on non-alcoholic wine.* —*Karl Kraus, 1909*

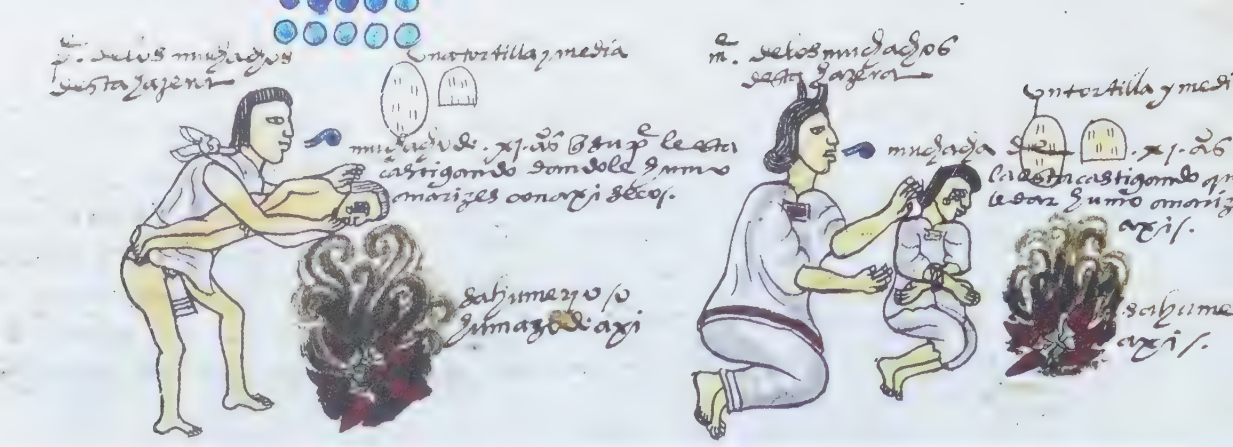
"Oh, *God!*" he cried suddenly, and started at the sound of his voice in the stillness. The rain dripped on. A minute longer he lay without moving, his hands clinched. Then he sprang to his feet and gave his clothes a tentative pat.

"I'm very damn wet!" he said aloud to the sundial.

The war began in the summer following his freshman year. Beyond a sporting interest in the German dash for Paris the whole affair failed either to thrill or interest him. With the attitude he might have held toward an amusing melodrama he hoped it would be long and bloody. If it had not continued he would have felt like an irate ticket holder at a prizefight where the principals refused to mix it up.

That was his total reaction.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *from* This Side of Paradise. *Fitzgerald wrote that soon after his autobiographical debut novel was published in 1920 to wide acclaim, "I began to bawl because I had everything I wanted and knew I would never be so happy again." Tender is the Night, his last complete novel about "a man used up," was published in 1934, six years before he died in Hollywood of a heart attack at the age of forty-four.*



Aztec children being trained and punished, from the Codex Mendoza, early 1540s.

1988: Odessa

UNDER THE LIGHTS

The dominance of football in Texas high schools had become the focus of raging debate all over the state in 1983. The governor of Texas, Mark White, appointed Ross Perot to head a committee on educational reform. In pointing to school systems he thought were skewed in favor of extracurricular activities, Perot took particular aim at Odessa.

On ABC's *Nightline*, he called Permian fans "football crazy," and during the show it was pointed out that a $5.6 million high school football stadium had been built in Odessa in 1982. The stadium included a sunken artificial-surface field eighteen feet below ground level, a two-story press box with VIP seating for school board members and other dignitaries, poured concrete seating for 19,032, and a full-time caretaker who lived in a house on the premises.

"He made it look like we were a bunch of West Texas hicks, fanatics," said Brad Allen, president of the Permian booster club in the early eighties, of Perot. The stadium "was something the community took a lot of pride in and he went on television and said you're a bunch of idiots for building it." Most of the money for the stadium had come from a voter-approved bond issue.

The war against Perot escalated quickly. The booster club geared up a letter-writing campaign to him, state legislators, and the governor. Nearly a thousand letters were sent in protest of Perot's condemnation of Odessa. Some of the ones to him were addressed "Dear Idiot," or something worse than that, and they not so gently told him to mind his own damn business and not disturb a way of life that had worked and thrived for years and brought the town a joy it could never have experienced anywhere else.

"It's our money," said Allen of the funds that were used to build the stadium. "If we choose to put it into a football program, and the graduates from our high schools are at or above the state level of standards, then screw you, leave us alone." At one point Perot, believing his motives had been misinterpreted and hoping to convince people that improving education in Texas was not a mortal sin, contemplated coming to Odessa to speak. But he decided against it, to the relief of some who thought he might be physically harmed if he did.

"There are so few other things we can look at with pride," said Allen. "We don't have a large university that has thirty or forty thousand students in it. We don't have the art museum that some communities have and are world-renowned. When somebody talks about West Texas, they talk about football. There is nothing to replace it. It's an integral part of what made the community strong. You take it away and it's almost like you strip the identity of the people."

The pull of it seemed irresistible. Allen's stepson, Phillip, had been a fullback on the 1980 Permian team that won the state championship. Allen readily admitted that Phillip was not a gifted athlete, but he had the fire and desire that came innately in a town that drank as

deeply from the chalice of high school football as Odessa.

Allen knew Phillip was something special in eighth grade, when he had broken his arm during the first defensive series of a game. Rather than come out, he managed to set it in the defensive huddle and played both ways the entire first half. By that time the arm had swelled up considerably, to the point that the forearm pads he wore had to be cut off, and unwillingly he went to the hospital. Allen said he was not proud of the incident, but he told the story freely, for it showed that his son had the ingredients to wear the black and white.

And certainly he wasn't the only one to have learned the much-admired lesson of no pain, no gain. In seasons past playing for Permian had involved other sacrifices. It had meant the loss of a testicle to a sophomore player when no one bothered to make sure he was thoroughly examined after he had injured his groin several hours earlier during an away game. Subsequently the testicle swelled up to the size of a grapefruit, and by the time the doctor saw him it was too late; it had to be removed. His mother was livid at what had happened, but the player pleaded with her not to push it because he feared it might interfere with his career at Permian and be held against him. He lost the testicle but he did make All-State.

In seasons past, playing for Permian had meant routinely vomiting during the grueling off-season workouts inside the hot and sweaty weight room. It had meant playing with a broken ankle that wasn't X-rayed because, if it had been known that it was broken, the player would have had to sit out the next game. It had meant playing with broken hands. It had meant a shot of novocaine during halftime to mask the pain of a deep ankle sprain or a hip pointer. It had meant popping painkillers and getting shots of Valium.

Behind the rows of stools stood the members of the 1988 Permian Panther high school football team. Dressed in their black game jerseys, they laughed and teased one another like privileged children of royalty. Directly in front of them, dressed in white jerseys and forming a little protective phalanx, were the Pepettes, a select group of senior girls who made up the school spirit squad. The Pepettes supported all teams but it was the football team they supported most. The number on the white jersey each girl wore corresponded to that of the player she had been assigned for the football season. With that assignment came various time-honored responsibilities.

As part of the tradition, each Pepette brought some type of sweet for her player every week before the game. She didn't necessarily have to make something from scratch, but there was indirect pressure to because of not-so-private grousing from players who tired quickly of bags of candy and not so discreetly let it be known that they much preferred something fresh-baked. If she had to buy something store-bought, it might as well be beer, and at least one player was able to negotiate such an arrangement with his Pepette during the season.

In addition, each Pepette also had to make a large sign for her player that went in his front yard and stayed there the entire season as a notice to the community that he played football for Permian. Previously the making of these yard signs, which looked like miniature Broadway marquees, had become quite competitive. Some of the Pepettes spent as much as $100 of their own money to make an individual sign, decorating it with twinkling lights and other attention-getting devices. It became a rather serious game of can-you-top-this, and finally a dictum was handed down that all the signs must be made the same way, without any neon.

A Pepette also had responsibility for making smaller posters, which went up in the school halls at the beginning of each week and were transferred to the gym for the mandatory Friday morning pep rally. The making of these signs could be quite laborious as well, and one Pepette during the season broke down in tears because she had had to stay up until the wee hours of the morning trying to keep up with the other Pepettes and make a fancy hall sign that her player never even thanked her for.

These were the basic Pepette requirements, but some girls went beyond in their show of spirit. They might embroider the map of Texas on towels and then spell out MOJO in the borders. Or they might make MOJO pillowcases that the players could take with them during road trips. Or they might place their fresh-baked cookies in tins elaborately decorated in the Permian colors of black and white. In previous years Pepettes had made scrapbooks for their players, including one with the cover made of lacquered wood and modeled on Disney's *The Jungle Book*. The book had clippings, cut out in ninety-degree angles as square and true as in an architectural rendering, of every story written about the Permian team that year. It also had beautiful illustrations and captions that tried to capture what it meant to be a Pepette.

"The countryside was filled with loyal and happy subjects serving their chosen panther," said a caption in a chapter entitled "Joy," and next to it was a picture of a little girl with flowers in her hand going up to a panther, the Permian mascot, roaring under a tree.

H.G. Bissinger, *from* Friday Night Lights. *Bissinger received a Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting in 1987 for his coverage of court corruption for the* Philadelphia Inquirer. *His 1998* Vanity Fair *article, "Shattered Glass," tracking the rise and fall of the fraudulent journalist Stephen Glass, became a Hollywood film of the same name.*

Girls learning to spin and boys to fight, illustration from Jacques le Grant's *Book of Good Manners*, fifteenth century.

1906: Maulbronn

HERMANN HESSE RAISES AN OBJECTION

Both of these precocious boys shyly, though unconsciously, tasted in their friendship the intimation of the delicate secrets of a first love affair. In addition, their pact had the harsh charm of their growing masculinity and the equally harsh spice of defying the entire student body, whose numerous friendships were still harmless games. The students disliked Heilner and could not understand Hans.

The more intimate and happier Hans became with his friend, the more alienated he became from school. The new sensation of happiness rushed through his blood and thoughts like young wine, and Livy and Homer lost all importance and attraction by comparison. The teachers watched in horror as their model student turned into a problem child and succumbed to the bad influence of the dubious Heilner. Teachers dread nothing so much as unusual characteristics in precocious boys during the initial stages of their adolescence. A certain streak of genius makes an ominous impression on them, for there exists a deep gulf between genius and the teaching profession. Anyone with a touch of genius seems to his teachers a freak from the very first. As far as teachers are concerned, they define young geniuses as those who are bad, disrespectful, smoke at fourteen, fall in love at fifteen, can be found at sixteen hanging out in bars, read forbidden books, write scandalous essays, occasionally stare down a teacher in class, are marked in the attendance book as rebels, and are budding candidates for room arrest. A schoolmaster will prefer to have a couple of dumbheads in his class than a single genius, and if you regard it objectively, he is of course right. His task is not to produce extravagant intellects but good Latinists, arithmeticians, and sober decent folk. The question of who suffers more acutely at the other's hands—the teacher at the boy's, or vice versa—who is more of a tyrant, more of a tormentor, and who profanes parts of the other's soul—student or teacher—is something you cannot examine without remembering your own youth in anger and shame. Yet that is not what concerns us here. We have the consolation that among true geniuses the wounds almost always heal. As their personalities develop, they create their art in spite of school. Once dead, and enveloped by the comfortable nimbus of remoteness, they are paraded by the schoolmasters before other generations of students as showpieces and noble examples. Thus the struggle between rule and spirit repeats itself year after year from school to school. The authorities go to infinite pains to nip the few profound or more valuable intellects in the bud. And time and again the ones who are detested by their teachers and frequently punished, the runaways and those expelled, are the ones who afterward add to society's treasure. But some—and who knows how many?—waste away with quiet obstinacy and finally go under.

According to the good old school precept, as soon as these two strange young boys, Hans and Heilner, came under suspicion they were treated with redoubled harshness. Only the headmaster, who was proud of Hans as his most zealous student of Hebrew, made an awkward attempt to save him. He invited Hans to his study, the handsome and picturesque belvedere that had been the prior's quarters where, legend has it, Doctor Faustus, who came from the nearby town of Knittlingen, long ago enjoyed his share of Elffinger wine.

"Have a seat, Giebenrath," he said in a man-to-man tone, once he had given a vigorous handshake to the boy who had entered so timidly. "I'd like to have a word with you. But I can call you Hans, can't I?"

"Please do, sir."

"You have probably noticed yourself that your work has not been quite up to par in the last few weeks—at least in Hebrew. Until a short while ago you probably were our best Hebraist, that's why it hurts me to notice such a sudden slackening off. Perhaps Hebrew doesn't give you as much pleasure as it used to?"

"Oh no, but it does, sir."

"Think about it a little! Things like that do happen. Perhaps your interest has switched to another subject?"

"No it hasn't, sir."

"Really not? Well, then we have to look for a cause elsewhere. Couldn't you help me find it?"

"I don't know.... I've always done my assignments...."

"Of course, my boy, of course. But *differendum est inter et inter*. Naturally you've done your assignments, you didn't have much choice, did you? But you used to accomplish a great deal more than that. You worked harder, or at least you were more interested. And I am asking myself: Why has your industry lapsed all of a sudden? You aren't sick, are you?"

Most of the young enthusiasts for learning, noble and low-born alike, become demented partisans of their professor. Like those who have a passionate love of racing can scarcely contain themselves but copy all the gestures of the jockeys, or bet upon the horses entered for the prize although they hardly have the wherewithal to live themselves, so the students show a similar eagerness for their teachers and the masters of their favorite studies.

—Gregory of Nazianzen, c. 390

"No."

"Or do you have headaches? You don't look as well as you sometimes do."

"Yes, I have headaches every so often."

"Is the daily workload too much for you?"

"Oh no, by no means."

"Or are you doing outside reading? Be honest."

"No, sir. I read hardly anything on the side."

"But then I don't quite understand, my dear boy. Something must be wrong somewhere. Will you promise me to make a little more of an effort?"

Hans placed his hand in the outstretched right of the mighty man who regarded him with a benign and serious look.

"That's the way, that's the way, my boy. Just don't let up or you'll get dragged beneath the wheel."

As he pressed Hans' hand, the relieved boy headed for the door. Then he was called back.

"Just one more thing, Giebenrath. You see quite a bit of Heilner, don't you?"

"Yes, quite a bit."

"More than of the others, I believe. Am I right?"

"But of course. He is my friend."

"But how did that happen? You are quite different from each other, aren't you?"

"I don't know. He's my friend, that's all."

"You know, don't you, that I don't much care for your friend. He is a restless, dissatisfied fellow; he may be gifted, but he does not accomplish much and does not have a good influence on you. It would make me glad if you saw a little less of him in the future.... Well?"

"I can't do that, sir."

"You can't? *Why* can't you?"

"Because he's my friend. I can't just leave him in the lurch like that."

"Hmm. But you could make an attempt to spend a little more time with the others, couldn't you? You're the only one who gives in to Heilner's harmful influence like that, and the consequences are beginning to show. What is it that attracts you so much to him?"

"I don't know myself. But we care for each other and it would be low and cowardly of me to leave him like that."

"I see. Well, I won't force you. But I hope that you'll free yourself from him gradually. I would like that. I would like that very much."

These last words had none of his former mildness. Hans was free to go now.

From Beneath the Wheel. *Attending the Maulbronn seminary for only eight months in 1891–1892, Hesse apprenticed at a tower-clock factory in Calw and a bookstore in Tübingen before publishing his first novel,* Peter Camenzind, *in 1904 at the age of twenty-six. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946, three years after he published his last novel,* The Glass Bead Game.

1952: Northampton

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER

The first day of rigor being over, I am torn between a multitude of conflicting emotions and insights. There is the grim pleasure that I managed to complete my page quota. There is the hysteric and persistent fear that I do not understand all I read, that my water level of comprehension is a good deal lower than it would be if I were taking the course slowly, step by step, under the guidance of a competent instructor.

There is the urge to procrastinate, to escape from the rigid cage of study routine I have made for myself. It lures me by a multitude of enchanting distractions; it beckons in the form of magazines, and gay, colorful stories and pictures; it seeks to simulate hunger, calling me to lose myself in the rationalization of continuous and nervous eating; it comes over the telephone, through young male voices, asking me (unknowingly) to come and do delightful things. Everywhere I turn, distraction beckons. It whispers, "How easy, to give up: excuses, you have good excuses. You were working, you were sick. Take a gut, plan to waste six hours per week next year. Forget about Phy Sci 193 and enjoy these last three weeks before the busy, delightful whirl of college again begins."

"To hell with you," I say. I have begun to work. My skin is broken out from subconscious anxiety and tension, self-induced. Nothing is more difficult than lashing a vagrant mind suddenly into long self-imposed stints of concentration. But I will learn a few things from this mass of material. I will read and ponder over my seventy-page quota per day. That should take ten days, approximately. I will then allow five days for writing, meditating, and typing. It shouldn't be as hard as I make it seem, once I get accustomed to the discipline I myself invented. A few evenings a week I will allow myself a date, providing I get my quota done in due schedule.

Today would be an absorbing study if I were good at stream of consciousness. My mind tried every trick to elude the prosaic task at hand. I got ideas for stories; the burning desire to revise recent poems and send them out flared bright; I suddenly decided in a spurt of clairvoyance that I would of course marry the other brother, and spent a good deal of time reasoning out pros and cons of one versus the other. I picked up a magazine, hurtled into a story, rushed through, and came up for air feeling slightly sick and very naughty, getting an almost perverse pleasure when I realized twenty precious minutes were gone. The phone rang and I actually fell downstairs in my eagerness to answer it—symbolically running away from my duties—glad for any reasonably valid excuse.

> *The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running. Where it is lacking there are no real students but only poor caricatures of apprentices who, at the end of their apprenticeship, will not even have a trade.* —*Simone Weil, 1942*

And so, now, it is almost midnight of the first day, and I have broken my resolution to go to bed early—postponing sleep, and thereby the inevitable waking up in tomorrow. Another device of escape—it seems that every year I wince and grovel through an obstacle course that looks quite formidable. Remember how tense I was last fall about the driver's license? The Smith Club tea speech? To be sure, I can always sneak out of this, but I won't let myself. It is an absorbing test of willpower—and of the conflicting wills that make up my psyche.

Sylvia Plath, *from her journals. Plath entered Smith College in 1951 and, despite being hospitalized after a bout of severe depression, went to England on a Fulbright scholarship upon graduation. She married fellow poet Ted Hughes in 1956, and, shortly after the release of her novel* The Bell Jar *in 1963, committed suicide at the age of thirty. Her confessional poetry has made her one of the most admired American poets of the twentieth century.*

Dustin Hoffman as Benjamin Braddock in a scene from *The Graduate*, 1967.

1912: New Haven

OWEN JOHNSON POINTS TO THE RIGHT CROWD

"What do you know about the society system here?" said Le Baron abruptly.

"Why, I know—there are three senior societies: Skull and Bones, Keys, Wolf's Head—but I guess that's all I do know."

"You'll hear a good deal of talk inside the college and out of it, too, about the system. It has its faults. But it's the best system there is, and it makes Yale what it is today. It makes fellows get out and work; it gives them ambitions, stops loafing and going to seed, and keeps a pretty good, clean, temperate atmosphere about the place."

"I know nothing at all about it," said Stover, perplexed.

"The seniors have fifteen in each; they give out their elections end of junior year, end of May. That's what we're all working for."

"Already?" said Stover involuntarily.

"There are fellows in your class," said Le Baron, "who've been working all summer, so as to get ahead in the competition for the Lit or *The Record*, or to make the leader of the glee club—fellows, of course, who know."

"But that's three years off."

"Yes, it's three years off," said Le Baron quietly.

"Then there are the junior fraternities; but they're large, and at present don't count much, except you have to make them. Then there are what are called sophomore societies." He hesitated a moment. "They are very important."

"Do you belong?" asked Stover innocently.

"Yes," said Le Baron after another hesitation. "Of course, we don't discuss our societies here. Others will tell you about them. But here's where your first test will come in."

Then came another lull. Stover, troubled,

frowning, sat staring at the brilliant windows across which passed, from time to time, a sudden shadow. The groups at the fence were singing a football song with a marching swing to it that had so often caught up his loyal soul as he had sat shivering in the grandstand for the game to begin. It was not all so simple—no, not at all simple. It wasn't as he had thought. It was complex, a little disturbing.

"This college is made up of all sorts of elements," said Le Baron at last. "And it is not easy to run it. Now, in every class there are just a small number of fellows who are able to do it and who will do it. They form the real crowd. All the rest don't count. Now Stover, you're going to have a chance at something big on the football side; but that is not all. You might make captain of the eleven and miss out on a senior election. You're going to be judged by your friends, and it is just as easy to know the right crowd as the wrong."

"What do you mean by the right crowd?" said Stover, conscious of just a little antagonism.

"The right crowd?" said Le Baron, a little perplexed to define so simple a thing. "Why, the crowd that is doing things, working for Yale; the crowd—"

"That the class ahead picks out to lead us," said Stover abruptly.

"Yes," said Le Baron frankly, "and it won't be a bad judgment. Money alone won't land a man in it, and there'll be some in it who work their way through college. On the whole, it's about the crowd you'll want to know all through life."

"I see," said Stover. His clasp tightened over his knees and he was conscious of a certain growing uncomfortable sensation. He liked Le Baron—he had looked up to him, in a way. Of course, it was all said in kindness, and yet—

"I'm frankly aristocratic in my point of view"—he heard the well-modulated voice continue—"and what I say others think. I'm older than most of my class and I've seen a good deal of the world at home and abroad. You may think the world begins outside of college. It doesn't; it begins right here. You want to make the friends that will help you along, here and outside. Don't lose sight of your opportunities, and be careful how you choose."

"Now, by that I mean don't make your friends too quickly. Get to know the different crowds but don't fasten to individuals until you see how things work out. This rather surprises you, doesn't it? Perhaps you don't like it."

"It does sort of surprise me," said Stover, who did not answer what he meant.

"Stover," said Le Baron, resting a hand on his knee, "I like you. I liked you from the first time we lined up in that Andover-Lawrenceville game. You've got the stuff in you to make the sort of leader we need at Yale. That's why I'm trying to make you see this thing as it is. You come from a school that doesn't send many fellows here. You haven't the fellows ahead pulling for you the way the other crowds have. I don't want you to make any mistake. Remember, you're going to be watched from now on."

I wonder whether if I had an education I should have been more or less a fool than I am.
—Alice James, 1889

"Watched?" said Stover, frowning.

"Yes; everything you do, everything you say—that's how you'll be judged. That's why I'm telling you these things."

"I appreciate it," said Stover, but without enthusiasm.

"Now, you've got a chance to make good on the eleven this year. If you do, you stand in line for the captaincy senior year. It lies with you to be one of the big men in the class. And this is the way to do it: get to know everyone in the class right off."

"What!" said Stover, genuinely surprised.

"I mean, bow to everyone, call them by name, but hold yourself apart," said Le Baron. "Make fellows come to you. Don't talk too much. Hold yourself in. Keep out of the crowd that is out booze-fighting—or, when you're with them, keep your head. There are a lot of fellows here with friends ahead of them who can cut loose a

certain amount, but it's dangerous. If you want to make what you ought to make of yourself, Stover, you've got to prove yourself; you've got to keep yourself well in hand."

Stover suddenly comprehended that Le Baron was exposing his own theory, that he, prospective captain of the crew, was imposing on himself.

It is a greater advantage to be honestly educated than honorably born.

—Desiderius Erasmus, 1518

Real education must ultimately be limited to men who insist on knowing—the rest is mere sheep herding. *—Ezra Pound, 1934*

"Don't ticket yourself for drinking."

"I won't."

"Or get known for gambling—oh, I'm not preaching a moral lesson; only, what you do, do quietly."

"I understand."

"And another thing: no fooling around with women; that isn't done here—that'll queer you absolutely."

"Of course."

"Now, you've got to do a certain amount of studying here. Better do it the first year and get in with the faculty."

"I will."

"There it is," said Le Baron, suddenly extending his hand toward the lighted college. "Isn't it worth working for—to win out in the end? And, Stover, it's easy enough when you know how. Play the game as others are playing it. It's a big game, and it'll follow you all through life. There it is; it's up to you. Keep your head clear and see straight."

The gesture of Le Baron, half-seen in the darkness, brought a strange trouble to Stover. It was as if, at the height of the eager confidence of his youth, someone had whispered in his ear and a shadowy hand had held before his eyes a gigantic temptation.

They sat silently. And all at once, as Stover gazed from the high, misty walls and the elm tops confounded in the night, a monstrous hand seemed to stretch down, impending over him, and the carefree windows suddenly to be transformed into myriad eyes, set on him in inquisition—eyes that henceforth indefatigably, remorselessly would follow him.

And with it something snapped, something fragile—the unconscious, simple democracy of boyhood. And as it went, it went forever. This was the world rushing in, dividing the hosts. This was the parting of the ways. The standards of judgment were the world's. It was not what he had thought. It was no longer the simple struggle. It was complex, disturbing, incomprehensible. To win he would have to change.

"It's been good of you to tell me all this," he said, giving his hand to Le Baron, and the words sounded hollow.

"I like you, Dink," said Le Baron, shaking hands warmly, "now you know the game, go in and win."

"It's awfully good of you," said Stover aimlessly. He stood watching Le Baron's strong, aristocratic figure go swinging across the dim campus in a straight, undeviating, well-calculated path.

He stood alone, looking at the new world. It was no longer the world of the honest day. It was brilliant, fascinating, alluring—awakening strange, poignant emotions—but it was another world, and the way to it had just been shown him.

He turned abruptly and went toward his room, troubled, wondering why he was so troubled, vainly seeking the reason, knowing not that it lay in the destruction of a fragile thing—his first illusion.

From Stover at Yale. *Himself a graduate of the Lawrenceville School and Yale University (class of 1900), Johnson knew whereof he wrote. During World War I, he served as a war correspondent for the* New York Times.

The Dance Class, by Edgar Degas, c. 1873–1875.

1507: Urbino

THE BIRTH OF COOL

"I am not obliged," said the Count, "to teach you how to acquire grace, or indeed anything else, but only to show you what a perfect courtier should be. And I would not undertake the task of teaching you how to acquire this quality, especially as a little while ago I said that the courtier ought to know how to wrestle and vault and so many other things which, never having learned them myself, I'm sure you know full well how I could teach them. Let it be enough that just as a good soldier knows how to tell the smith what style and shape and quality his armor should be, and yet cannot teach him how to hammer or temper it, so perhaps I shall know how to tell you what a perfect courtier should be, but not be able to teach you what you have to do to become one. However, although it is almost proverbial that grace cannot be learned, to satisfy your request as far as I can, I say that if anyone is to acquire grace as a sportsman or athlete (first assuming that he is not disqualified by nature) he should start young and learn the principles from the best teachers. How important this seemed to King Philip of Macedon, for instance, can be seen from the fact that he wanted it to be Aristotle, the eminent philosopher, and perhaps the greatest ever, who should teach the elements of letters to his son Alexander.

"Therefore anyone who wants to be a good pupil must not only do things well but must also make a constant effort to imitate and, if possible, exactly reproduce his master. And when he feels he has made some progress it is very profitable for him to observe different kinds of courtiers and, ruled by the good judgment that

must always be his guide, take various qualities now from one man and now from another. Just as in the summer fields the bees wing their way among the plants from one flower to the next, so the courtier must acquire this grace from those who appear to possess it and take from each one the quality that seems most commendable. And he should certainly not act like a friend of ours, whom you all know, who thought that he greatly resembled King Ferdinand the Younger of Aragon but had not tried to imitate him except in the way he raised his head and twisted a corner of his mouth, a habit which the king had acquired through illness. There are many like this, who think they are marvelous if they can simply resemble a great man in some one thing, and often they seize on the only defect he has. However, having already thought a great deal about how this grace is acquired, and leaving aside those who are endowed with it by their stars, I have discovered a universal rule which seems to apply more than any other in all human actions or words: namely, to steer away from affectation at all costs as if it were a rough and dangerous reef, and (to use perhaps a novel word for it) to practice in all things a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless. I am sure that grace springs especially from this, since everyone knows how difficult it is to accomplish some unusual feat perfectly, and so facility in such things excites the greatest wonder; whereas, in contrast, to labor at what one is doing and, as we say, to make bones over it, shows an extreme lack of grace and causes everything, whatever its worth, to be discounted. So we can truthfully say that true art is what does not seem to be art, and the most important thing is to conceal it, because if it is revealed this discredits a man completely and ruins his reputation. I remember once having read of certain outstanding orators of the ancient world who, among the other things they did, tried hard to make everyone believe that they were ignorant of letters; and, dissembling their knowledge, they made their speeches appear to have been composed very simply and according to the promptings of nature and truth rather than effort and artifice. For if the people had known of their skills, they would have been frightened of being deceived. So you see that to reveal intense application and skill robs everything of grace."

Baldassare Castiglione, *from* The Courtier. *Castiglione was an Italian diplomat most famous for his book of conversations that discusses the perfect Renaissance courtier. After James Joyce read the dialogue, his brother told him that he had become more polite but less sincere.*

French engraving of a fencing lesson, eighteenth century.

c. 1965: Kyoto

LEARNING THE ROPES

I have always regretted the fact that I had to stop my academic schooling when I was fifteen. I didn't understand why the Nyokoba School taught no academic subjects. I was most disturbed that the school didn't teach us English or French. We were being prepared to entertain world leaders but not being given the tools to communicate with them. It seemed completely irrational.

Soon after becoming a *maiko* [apprentice] I lodged a complaint about the lack of foreign language education. I was told to get a tutor, which I did, but they clearly weren't getting the point. However, being a novice member of the *karyukai* [realm of the geisha] did provide me with an unusual education, one that I can't imagine having had anywhere else. I met all kinds of brilliant and accomplished people, some of whom became my trusted friends.

Meanwhile, my geographical boundaries did not expand as quickly as my intellectual horizons. I rarely ventured out of the neighborhood. Gion Kobu lies east of the Kamo River, Kyoto's central artery. Downtown Kyoto, the commercial hub of the city, lies on the other side. I was not allowed to cross the river by myself until I was eighteen or to venture outside the district without a chaperone.

My customers were my tickets to the outside world. They were my real teachers. One night, I was summoned to an *ozashiki* [banquet] at the *ochaya* [tea house] Tomiyo that was being hosted by one of its regular patrons, the Noh drama costume designer Kayoh Wakamatsu. Mr. Wakamatsu was known as an aficionado of *geiko* [geisha] and our world.

I readied myself for my entrance. I placed the flask of sake on its tray, slid open the door, and said, "*Ookini*," which actually means, "Thank you." We use it like, "Excuse me." There was quite a party going on. Seven or eight of my *onesan* [mentors] were already in the room with him.

One of the *onesan* said, "You slid open the door incorrectly."

"I'm sorry," I replied.

I slid the door closed and tried again.

No one complained.

I said "*ookini*" again and entered the room.

"You entered the room incorrectly."

And then, "The way you're holding the tray is all wrong."

And then, "That's not the right way to hold the sake flask."

I was getting frustrated but tried to keep my composure. I went back out into the hall to try again.

> *Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.* —*St. Paul the Apostle*

The *okasan* [proprietress] of the Tomiyo pulled me aside:

"What's going on?"

"My *onesan* are kindly offering me instructions on how to do everything correctly," I answered.

I knew they were really being cruel. I just wanted to see how far things would go before the guest or *okasan* intervened.

"Oh please," she said. "They're just teasing you. Go on in there and don't pay them any mind."

This time no one said a word. Mr. Wakamatsu asked me, nicely, to bring him a large writing brush, an ink stick, and an ink stone. I went to do as he asked. He asked me to prepare the ink. I ground the stick against the stone and carefully added the right amount of water. When the ink was the right consistency, I dipped the brush and handed it to him.

He asked the ringleader of the *onesan*, Miss S, to stand up in front of him. Miss S was wearing a white kimono decorated in a pine motif. Mr. Wakamatsu lifted the brush and looked her in the face. "You have all treated Mineko disgracefully but I'm holding you personally

responsible." He proceeded to slash the brush across the front of her kimono, leaving thick black strokes in its wake.

"Go away, all of you. I never want to see any of you again. Please leave!"

The *geiko* shuffled out of the room en masse.

The *okasan* heard the commotion and came running.

"Wa-san [his nickname], what in the world happened?"

"I will not put up with this kind of nastiness. Please don't book any of that bunch for me again."

"Of course, Wa-san. Whatever you wish."

This experience left a strong impression on me. It made me both sad and happy. I was sad that my *onesan* would treat me like that. I was worried that I had more of this kind of thing ahead of me. But I was encouraged by Wa-san's kindness. It made me feel like I was not alone. And he had not only noticed my discomfort but had gone out of his way to act on my behalf. Wa-san was an incredibly nice man. The next day he sent Miss S three kimono and brocade obi in care of the *ochaya*. These actions endeared me to him forever. He became one of my favorite customers and I became one of his favorite *maiko*.

Mineko Iwasaki, *from* Geisha: A Life. *At the age of five, Mineko went to the* okiya *in Kyoto to study the arts of entertainment. She became one of Japan's premier geishas by the age of twenty-one. Interviewed by novelist Arthur Golden for his 1997 bestselling book,* Memoirs of a Geisha, *she published her autobiography in 2002.*

The Education of the Virgin, by Georges de La Tour, c. 1650.

1929: London

POET'S HEART, WOMAN'S BODY

Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went very probably—his mother was an heiress—to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin—Ovid, Virgil, and Horace—and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighborhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theater; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theater, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe: meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practicing his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter—indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighboring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said, and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night, and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that

> *Anyone who has a child should train him to be either a physicist or a ballet dancer. Then he'll escape.* —*W.H. Auden, 1947*

sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theater. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager—a fat, loose-lipped man—guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting—no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted—you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same gray eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actor manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so—who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body?—killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some crossroads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.

Virginia Woolf, *from* A Room of One's Own. *Woolf was one of the preeminent literary modernists of the twentieth century. Born in London in 1882 to a distinguished family that promoted an appreciation of the arts and numbered among its acquaintances both Henry James and Thomas Hardy, Woolf as a child was often ill, unable to keep regular hours in school.*

1513: San Casciano

PHILOSOPHER KING

Everyone realizes how praiseworthy it is for a prince to honor his word and to be straightforward rather than crafty in his dealings; nonetheless, contemporary experience shows that princes who have achieved great things have been those who have given their word lightly, who have known how to trick men with their cunning, and who, in the end, have overcome those abiding by honest principles.

You must understand, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to men, and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequate one must needs have recourse to the second. So a prince must understand how to make a nice use of the beast and the man. The ancient writers taught princes about this by an allegory, when they described how Achilles and many other princes of the ancient world were sent to be brought up by Chiron, the centaur, so that he might train them his way. All the allegory means in making the teacher half-beast and half-man is that a prince must know how to act according to the nature of both, and that he cannot survive otherwise.

So, as a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast, he must learn from the fox and the lion, because the lion is defenseless against traps and a fox is defenseless against wolves. Therefore one must be a fox in order to recognize traps and a lion to frighten off wolves. Those who simply act like lions are stupid. So it follows that a prudent ruler cannot, and must not, honor his word when it places him at a disadvantage and when the reasons for which he made his promise no longer exist. If all men were good, this precept would not be good; but because men are wretched creatures who would not keep their word to you, you need not keep your word to them. And no prince ever lacked good excuses to color his bad faith. One could give innumerable modern instances of this, showing how many pacts and promises have been made null and void by the bad faith of princes: those who have known best how to imitate the fox have come off best. But one must know how to color one's actions and to be a great liar and deceiver. Men are so simple, and so much creatures of circumstance, that the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived.

A prince cannot observe all those things which give men a reputation for virtue, because in order to maintain his state he is often forced to act in defiance of good faith, of charity, of kindness, of religion. And so he should have a flexible disposition, varying as fortune and circumstances dictate. He should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but he should know how to do evil, if that is necessary.

A prince, then, must be very careful not to say a word which does not seem inspired by the five qualities I mentioned earlier. To those seeing and hearing him, he should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man. Men in general judge by their eyes rather than by their hands; because everyone is in a position to watch, few are in a position to come in close touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are. In the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no court of appeal, one judges by the result. So let a prince set about the task of conquering and maintaining his state; his methods will always be judged honorable and will be universally praised. The common people are always impressed by appearances and results. In this context, there are only common people, and there is no room for the few when the many are supported by the state. A certain contemporary ruler, whom it is better not to name, never preaches anything except peace and good faith; and he is an enemy of both one and the other, and if he had ever honored either of them he would have lost either his standing or his state many times over.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *from* The Prince. *Writing both his treatise on ruling and his* Discourses on Livy *while in exile from Florence in 1513, Machiavelli returned to the city in 1520 after the death of Lorenzo di Piero de Medici. One year later, he was made the official historian of the Florentine republic.*

1900: Albany

THEODORE ROOSEVELT MAKES A MAN

A boy needs both physical and moral courage. Neither can take the place of the other. When boys become men they will find out that there are some soldiers very brave in the field who have proved timid and worthless as politicians, and some politicians who show an entire readiness to take chances and assume responsibilities in civil affairs but who lack the fighting edge when opposed to physical danger. In each case, with soldiers and politicians alike, there is but half a virtue. The possession of the courage of the soldier does not excuse the lack of courage in the statesman, and even less does the possession of the courage of the statesman excuse shrinking on the field of battle. Now, this is all just as true of boys. A coward who will take a blow without returning it is a contemptible creature; but, after all, he is hardly as contemptible as the boy who dares not stand up for what he deems right against the sneers of his companions who are themselves wrong. Ridicule is one of the favorite weapons of wickedness, and it is sometimes incomprehensible how good and brave boys will be influenced for evil by the jeers of associates who have no one quality that calls for respect, but who affect to laugh at the very traits which ought to be peculiarly the cause for pride.

There is no need to be a prig. There is no need for a boy to preach about his own good conduct and virtue. If he does he will make himself offensive and ridiculous. But there is urgent need that he should practice decency; that he should be clean and straight, honest and truthful, gentle and tender, as well as brave. If he can once get to a proper understanding of things, he will have a far more hearty contempt for the boy who has begun a course of feeble dissipation, or who is untruthful, mean, dishonest, or cruel, than this boy and his fellows can possibly in return feel for him. The very fact that the boy should be manly and able to hold his own, that he should be ashamed to submit to bullying without instant retaliation, should in return make him abhor any form of bullying, cruelty, or brutality.

Fidel, Raúl, and Ramón Castro in school uniforms, 1942.

The boy can best become a good man by being a good boy—not a goody-goody boy, but just a plain good boy. I do not mean that he must love only the negative virtues; I mean he must love the positive virtues also. "Good," in the largest sense, should include whatever is fine, straightforward, clean, brave, and manly. The best boys I know—the best men I know—are good at their studies or their business, fearless and stalwart, hated and feared by all that is wicked and depraved, incapable of submitting to wrongdoing, and equally incapable of being aught but tender to the weak and helpless. A healthy-minded boy should feel hearty contempt for the coward and even more hearty indignation for the boy who bullies girls or small boys, or tortures animals. One prime reason for abhorring cowards is because every good boy should have it in him to thrash the objectionable boy as the need arises.

Of course the effect that a thoroughly manly, thoroughly straight and upright boy can have upon the companions of his own age and upon those who are younger is incalculable. If he is not thoroughly manly, then they will not respect him, and his good qualities will count for but little; while, of course, if he is mean, cruel, or wicked, then his physical strength and force of mind merely make him so much the more objectionable a member of society. He cannot do good work if he is not strong and does not try with his whole heart and soul to count in any contest; and his strength will be a curse to himself and to everyone else if he does not have thorough command over himself and over his own evil passions, and if he does not use his strength on the side of decency, justice, and fair dealing.

In short, in life as in a football game, the principle to follow is: Hit the line hard; don't foul and don't shirk, but hit the line hard!

From "The American Boy." Roosevelt rounded up cowboys from the West and recruited Ivy League graduates from the East to make up the contingent of "Rough Riders" that he led on campaign to Cuba during the Spanish-American War of 1898. He was elected governor of New York upon his return, and in 1901, at the age of forty-two, became the youngest president of the United States.

A student in Tiniteqilaaq, Greenland, walks home from school in a violent snow storm, 2002. Photograph by Jacob Aue Sobol.

1929: Derbyshire

A GOOD BEATING

At Repton, prefects were never called prefects. They were called Boazers, and they had the power of life and death over us junior boys. They could summon us down in our pajamas at nighttime and thrash us for leaving just one football sock on the floor of the changing room when it should have been hung up on a peg. A Boazer could thrash us for a hundred and one other piddling little misdemeanors—for burning his toast at tea time, for failing to dust his study properly, for failing to get his study fire burning in spite of spending half your pocket money on fire lighters, for being late at roll call, for talking in evening Prep, for forgetting to change into house shoes at six o'clock. The list was endless.

"Four with the dressing gown on or three with it off?" the Boazer would say to you in the changing room late at night.

Others in the dormitory had told you what to answer to this question. "Four with it on," you mumbled, trembling.

This Boazer was famous for the speed of his strokes. Most of them paused between each stroke to prolong the operation, but Williamson, the great footballer, cricketer, and athlete, always delivered his strokes in a series of swift back-and-forth movements without any pause between them at all. Four strokes would rain down upon your bottom so fast that it was all over in four seconds.

A ritual took place in the dormitory after each beating. The victim was required to stand in the middle of the room and lower his pajama trousers so that the damage could be inspected. Half a dozen experts would crowd round you and express their opinions in highly professional language.

"*What* a super job."

"He's got *every single* one in the same place!"

"Crikey! Nobody could tell you had more than *one*, except for the mess!"

"Boy, that Williamson's got a *terrific* eye!"

"*Of course* he's got a terrific eye! Why d'you think he's a Cricket Teamer?"

"There's no wet blood though! If you had had just one more he'd have got some blood out!"

"Through a *dressing gown*, too! It's pretty amazing, isn't it!"

"Most Boazers couldn't get a result like that *without* a dressing gown!"

"You must have tremendously thin skin! Even Williamson couldn't have done that to *ordinary* skin!"

> *The parents have a right to say that no teacher paid by their money shall rob their children of faith in God and send them back to their homes skeptical, or infidels, or agnostic, or atheists.*
>
> *—William Jennings Bryan, 1925*

"Did he use the long one or the short one?"

"Hang *on*! Don't pull them up yet! I've *got* to see this again!"

And I would stand there, slightly bemused by this cool clinical approach. Once, I was still standing in the middle of the dormitory with my pajama trousers around my knees when Williamson came through the door. "What on earth do you think you're doing?" he said, knowing very well exactly what I was doing.

"N-nothing," I stammered. "N-nothing at all."

"Pull those pajamas up and get into bed immediately!" he ordered, but I noticed that as he turned away to go out of the door, he craned his head ever so slightly to one side to catch a glimpse of my bare bottom and his own handiwork. I was certain I detected a little glimmer of pride around the edges of his mouth before he closed the door behind him.

Roald Dahl, *from* Boy: Tales of a Childhood. *As a teenager Dahl showed no sign of his prowess as a writer. His 1931 report card from Repton, a renowned British boarding school, declared him "a persistent muddler." Rather than attending college, he sold Shell oil in Tanzania, flew for the Royal Air Force in Nairobi, and "learned how to look after myself in a way that no young person can ever do by staying in civilization."*

c. 1772: Paris

DENIS DIDEROT CONDUCTS A SEMINAR

He
You think that happiness is the same for all. What a strange illusion! Your own brand presupposes a certain romantic turn of mind that we don't all possess, an unusual type of soul, a peculiar taste. You dignify this oddity with the name of virtue and you call it philosophy. But are virtue and philosophy made for everybody? Some can acquire them, some can keep them. Imagine the universe good and philosophical, and admit that it would be devilishly dull. So long live philosophy and long live the wisdom of Solomon—drink good wine, blow yourself out with luscious food, have a tumble with lovely women, lie on soft beds. Apart from that the rest is vanity.

I
What! Fighting for one's country?

He
Vanity! There's no such thing left. From pole to pole all I can see is tyrants and slaves.

I
Having a position in society and fulfilling its duties?

He
Vanity! What does it matter whether you have a position or not so long as you are rich, since you only take up a position in order to get rich? Fulfilling your duties, where does that land you? Into jealousy, upsets, persecution. Is that the way to get on? Butter people up, good God, butter them up: watch the great, study their tastes, fall in with their whims, pander to their vices, approve of their injustices. That's the secret.

I
What makes fashionable people so choosy about their amusements is their abysmal idleness.

He
Don't you believe it. They are always on the go.

I
As they never get tired, they never take a rest either.

He
Don't you believe it. They are always knocked up.

I
Pleasure is always a business for them and never a need.

He
All to the good. A need is always painful.

I
They wear everything out. Their souls run to seed and boredom takes over. In the midst of oppressive opulence it would be a kindness to relieve them of life. All they know of happiness is the part which cloys first. I'm not above the pleasures of the senses myself. I have a palate too, and it is tickled by a delicate dish or a rare wine. I have a heart and a pair of eyes, and enjoy looking at a pretty woman. I like to feel her firm, round bosom, press her lips with mine, drink pleasure from her eyes, and die of it in her arms. I am not averse to a night out with my men friends sometimes, and even a pretty rowdy one. But I won't hide the fact that it is infinitely more pleasurable for me to have helped the unfortunate; successfully concluded some tricky bit of business; given some good advice; read something pleasant; taken a walk with a man or woman I am fond of; spent a few instructional hours with my children; written a worthwhile page; fulfilled the duties of my position; said some tender, soft words to the woman I love and made her love me.

He
What funny people you are!

I
And you are people to be pitied if you can't see that we have risen above our human condition.

He
That is a kind of felicity I shall find it hard to get to know, for it is not often met with. So according to you we should all be virtuous?

I
Certainly, if we want to be happy.

He
And yet I can see countless good people who are not happy, and countless happy ones who are not good.

I
So you think.

He
And since I can achieve happiness through failings natural to me which I have acquired without toil and retain without effort, which fit in with the customs of my country, appeal to the tastes of my patrons, and are more in harmony with their little personal requirements than some virtues which would cramp their style by nagging away at them from morn till eve, it would be strange indeed for me to torture myself like a soul in hell so as to mutilate myself into something quite different from what I am. I should give myself a character quite foreign to me and qualities most praiseworthy (I grant you that, so as to have no argument), but which would cost a lot to acquire and land me nowhere, or worse than nowhere, because I should be continually satirizing the rich from whom poor devils like me have to make a living. People laud virtue but they hate and avoid it, for it freezes you to death, and in this world you have to keep your feet warm. Besides, it would inevitably make me ill-tempered, for why do we so often see the virtuous so hard, tiresome, and unsociable? Because they have subjected themselves to a discipline that is not in their nature. They are miserable, and when you are miserable yourself you make others miserable too. That's not my idea, nor that of my patrons: I have to be gay, adaptable, agreeable, amusing, odd. Virtue commands respect, and respect is a liability. Virtue commands admiration, and admiration is not funny. I have to deal with people who are bored and I have to make them laugh. Now, what makes people laugh is ridiculousness and silliness, so I have to be ridiculous and silly. Supposing one day Rameau began displaying scorn for fortune, women, good fare, and slothful ease and went spartan—what would he be? A hypocrite. Rameau must be what he is: a thief happy to be among wealthy thieves, and not a trumpeter of virtue or even a virtuous man gnawing his crust of bread in solitude or with a lot of down-and-outs. To put it bluntly, I have no use for your felicity or for the good life of a handful of visionaries like you.

> *Consider the university professor. What is his function? Simply to pass on to fresh generations of numbskulls a body of so-called knowledge that is fragmentary, unimportant, and, in large part, untrue. His whole professional activity is circumscribed by the prejudices, vanities, and avarices of his university trustees: i.e., a committee of soap boilers, nail manufacturers, bank directors, and politicians. The moment he offends these vermin he is undone. He cannot so much as think aloud without running a risk of having them fan his pantaloons.*
>
> *—H.L. Mencken, 1956*

From Rameau's Nephew. *When Diderot chose to become a writer, his father disowned him. In the 1730s and '40s he earned his meager living by composing sermons for missionaries, translating philosophical tracts, and tutoring the children of wealthy families. His contributions to the* Encyclopédie, *published in France between 1751 and 1772, established him as one of the major figures of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.*

c. 1506: Italy

BESTIARY

The Rural School Teacher, by Diego Rivera, 1923.

If neither love nor reason suffice to teach us our duty, let us turn to the example of the brute creation. For mankind has admittedly learned therefrom much useful knowledge. For instance, the hippopotamus has shown us the method of cutting a vein; the ibis the use of the clyster, so much approved by physicians. The stag has taught men that dittany is helpful in drawing out arrows, and that the eating of crabs is an antidote to the poison of spiders. Goats have proved that ivy is a remedy in certain affections. Lizards use dittany against the bite of snakes, their standing foes. From the weasel we learned the use of rue, from the serpent the use of fennel in affections of the eye. The dragon is our warrant for employing lettuce in sickness. Much more of such knowledge have we derived from dumb animals. Practical arts also have been acquired from them to our great profit. I might almost say that there is nothing which advantages the life of man which nature has not shown us some example in wild creatures, to the end that they who have not learned philosophy and the rational arts may be admonished by them what men may do. Attend, therefore, to that which we may learn from them as to the training of children. We see that every savage creature is not content only to produce its young, but teaches it, and shapes it to fulfill its proper function. A bird is, indeed, created with instinct for flight, but we see how the fledgling is led on and guided in its first attempts by the parent birds. The cat teaches her kittens to watch, to spring, to kill. The stag leads her young in chase, brings them to the leap, shows the methods of escape from pursuit. Authors have recounted to us that the elephant and the dolphin exhibit a veritable art in educating their young ones. So of nightingales—the old bird goes in front, and calls back to and corrects the young one, which in turn follows and obeys. And I affirm that as the instinct of the dog is to hunt, of the bird to fly, of the horse to gallop, so the natural bent of man is to philosophy and right conduct. As every creature most readily learns that for which it is created, therefore will man, with but slight effort, be brought to follow that to which nature has given him so strong an instinct—excellence—*but on one condition*: that nature be reinforced by the wise energy of the educator.

Desiderius Erasmus, *from* De Pueris Instituendis. *In 1495, Erasmus studied Scholastic theology at the University of Paris, where he learned that "the eggs were stale and the theology was staler." He had mastered Greek by 1502, and the publication in 1516 of his Greek-Latin New Testament served as a primary source text for William Tyndale's first English translation of the New Testament in 1526.*

1951: London

GRAHAM GREENE'S BOOKS OF DIVINATION

Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives. In later life we admire, we are entertained, we may modify some views we already hold, but we are more likely to find in books merely a confirmation of what is in our minds already: as in a love affair it is our own features that we see reflected flatteringly back.

But in childhood all books are books of divination, telling us about the future, and like the fortune teller who sees a long journey in the cards or death by water they influence the future. I suppose that is why books excited us so much. What do we ever get nowadays from reading to equal the excitement and the revelation in those first fourteen years? Of course I should be interested to hear that a new novel by Mr. E.M. Forster was going to appear this spring, but I could never compare that mild expectation of civilized pleasure with the missed heartbeat, the appalled glee I felt when I found on a library shelf a novel by Rider Haggard, Percy Westerman, Captain Brereton, or Stanley Weyman which I had not read before. It is in those early years that I would look for the crisis, the moment when life took a new slant in its journey toward death.

I remember distinctly the suddenness with which a key turned in a lock and I found I could read—not just the sentences in a reading book with the syllables coupled like railway carriages, but a real book. It was paper-covered with the picture of a boy, bound and gagged, dangling at the end of a rope inside a well with the water rising above his waist—an adventure of Dixon Brett, detective. All a long summer holiday I kept my secret, as I believed: I did not want anybody to know that I could read. I suppose I half-consciously realized even then that this was the dangerous moment. I was safe so long as I could not read—the wheels had not begun to turn, but now the future stood around on bookshelves everywhere waiting for the child to choose: the life of a chartered accountant, perhaps, a colonial civil servant, a planter in China, a steady job in a bank, happiness and misery, eventually one particular form of death, for surely we choose our death much as we choose our job. It grows out of our acts and our evasions, out of our fears and out of our moments of courage. I suppose my mother must have discovered my secret, for on the journey home I was presented for the train with another real book, a copy of Ballantyne's *Coral Island* with only a single picture to look at, a colored frontispiece. But I would admit nothing. All the long journey, I stared at the one picture and never opened the book.

But there on the shelves at home (so many shelves, for we were a large family) the books waited—one book in particular, but before I reach that one down let me take a few others at random from the shelf. Each was a crystal in which the child dreamed that he saw life moving. Here in a cover stamped dramatically in several colors was Captain Gilson's *The Pirate Aeroplane*. I must have read that book six times at least—the story of a lost civilization in the Sahara and of a villainous Yankee pirate with an airplane like a box kite and bombs the size of tennis balls who held the golden city to ransom. It was saved by the hero, a young subaltern who crept up to the pirate camp to put the airplane out of action. He was captured and watched his enemies dig his grave. He was to be shot at dawn, and to pass the time and keep his mind from uncomfortable thoughts the amiable Yankee pirate played cards with him—the mild nursery game of Kuhn Kan. The memory of that nocturnal game on the edge of life haunted me for years, until I set it to rest at last in one of my own novels with a game of poker played in remotely similar circumstances.

And here is *Sophy of Kravonia* by Anthony Hope—the story of a kitchen maid who became a queen. One of the first films I ever saw, about 1911, was made from that book, and I can hear still the rumble of the queen's guns crossing the high Kravonian pass beaten hollowly out on a single piano. Then there was

Stanley Weyman's *The Story of Francis Cludde*, and above all other books at that time of my life, *King Solomon's Mines*.

This book did not perhaps provide the crisis, but it certainly influenced the future. If it had not been for that romantic tale of Allan Quartermain, Sir Henry Curtis, Captain Good, and above all, the ancient witch Gagool, would I at nineteen have studied the appointments list of the Colonial Office and very nearly picked on the Nigerian Navy for a career? And later, when surely I ought to have known better, the odd African fixation remained. In 1935 I found myself sick with fever on a camp bed in a Liberian native's hut with a candle going out in an empty whisky bottle and a rat moving in the shadows. Wasn't it the incurable fascination of Gagool with her bare yellow skull, the wrinkled scalp that moved and contracted like the hood of a cobra, that led me to work all through 1942 in a little stuffy office in Freetown, Sierra Leone? There is not much in common between the land of the Kukuanas, behind the desert and the mountain range of Sheba's Breast, and a tin-roofed house on a bit of swamp where the vultures moved like domestic turkeys and the pye-dogs kept me awake on moonlit nights with their wailing, and the white women yellowed by atebrin drove by to the club. But the two belonged at any rate to the same continent, and however distantly, to the same region of the imagination—the region of uncertainty, of not knowing the way about. Once I came a little nearer to Gagool and her witch hunters, one night in Zigita on the Liberian side of the French Guinea border, when my servants sat in their shuttered hut with their hands over their eyes and someone beat a drum and a whole town stayed behind closed doors while the big bush devil—whom it would mean blindness to see—moved between the huts.

From "The Lost Childhood." The author of numerous well-known twentieth-century novels, among them Our Man in Havana *and* The Confidential Agent, *Greene used the names of his characters as aliases on his business cards. To one of his favorite mistresses, Catherine Walston, he once said, "If anybody ever tries to write a biography of me, how complicated they are going to find it and how misled they are going to be."*

German students burn "un-German" books at a Nazi party rally, Opera Square, Berlin, 1933.

c. 585: Chang'an

POLISHED GOLD

People of the world, whether wise or stupid, all desire to understand more people and see a wide range of events but they are unwilling to read. This is like wanting to eat a full meal while hating to cook it, or desiring warm clothing but being too lazy to make it. Those who read may know what has happened throughout the world from the time of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung until now—not only the personalities, events, success or failure, likes or dislikes of human beings, but also those things which the universe cannot hide nor the spirits conceal.

Suppose a guest challenges his host, saying, "I have noticed that some use a strong bow and a long spear to punish evil and bring peace to the people, thus becoming a duke or a marquis. Others use literature, elegance, and official training to rectify disordered times and to enrich the nation, thus becoming ministers or premiers. Still others who are well learned concerning the past and present, with both civil and military ability, nevertheless have neither position nor income; their wives and children suffer from hunger and cold. Moreover such people are innumerable. What value is there in learning?"

To this the host replies, "Failure or success in a person's fate is like gold, jade, wood, and stone. To cultivate oneself by learning and skill is like polishing and carving: the polished gold or jade is certainly more beautiful than the gold ore or uncut jade, and broken pieces of wood or stone are naturally uglier than the well-carved. Can you say that carved wood or stone are more valuable than the unworked gold or jade? You cannot compare the poor and humble condition of a learned person with the riches and nobility of the unlearned. Moreover, mailed warriors and pen-holding officials, quite unknown after death, are as numerous as hair on a cow's hide; outstanding and eminent persons are as rare as the chih plant, while those who stick to plain silk and yellow scrolls, who ponder morality and virtue, who work painstakingly without reward, are as unusual as a solar eclipse. Idle enjoyers of fame and gain are as numerous as autumn weeds. How can you find a common basis on which to discuss such conditions? Moreover, I have heard that "the highest class of men are those who are born with a natural understanding; the next class are those who acquire understanding by study and application." Therefore study will increase one's knowledge and ability to understand. A genius with ability above all others may become a general who can unconsciously use the same tactics as Sun Tzu and Wu Qi; or he may become a statesman who can attain to the teaching of Kuan-chung and Zi Chan. Even though unlearned, I should call him a scholar. Now you cannot be such; if you do not learn from the examples of the past, you are like those who sleep with their heads wrapped in the bedclothes.

> *"The best thing for being sad," replied Merlyn, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honor trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then—to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting."*
>
> *—T.H. White, 1958*

Yan Zhitui, *from* Family Instructions for the Yan Clan. *Yan was a scholar and government official who served four successive dynasties. He stressed the need for mastering calligraphy, a musical instrument, and painting, but warned his sons against practicing too much; if they did, those of higher rank could humiliate them by constantly calling upon them to entertain.*

1906: New York City

MARK TWAIN DEFINES
MAN THE MACHINE

Old Man
What are the materials of which a steam engine is made?

Young Man
Iron, steel, brass, white metal, and so on.

Old Man
Where are these found?

Young Man
In the rocks.

Old Man
You could make the engine out of the rocks themselves?

Young Man
Yes, a brittle one and not valuable.

Old Man
You would not require much of such an engine as that?

Young Man
No—substantially nothing.

Old Man
To make a fine and capable engine how would you proceed?

Young Man
Drive tunnels and shafts into the hills; blast out the iron ore; crush it, smelt it, reduce it to pig iron; put some of it through the Bessemer process and make steel of it. Mine and treat and combine the several metals of which brass is made.

Old Man
Then?

Young Man
Out of the perfected result, build the fine engine.

Old Man
You would require much of this one?

Young Man
Oh, indeed yes.

Old Man
It could drive lathes, drills, planers, punches, polishers—in a word, all the cunning machines of a great factory?

Young Man
It could.

Old Man
What could the stone engine do?

Young Man
Drive a sewing machine, possibly—nothing more, perhaps.

Old Man
Men would admire the other engine and rapturously praise it?

Young Man
Yes.

Old Man
But not the stone one?

Young Man
No.

Old Man
The merits of the metal machine would be far above those of the stone one?

Young Man
Of course.

Old Man
Personal merits?

Young Man
Personal merits? How do you mean?

Old Man
It would be personally entitled to the credit of its own performance?

Young Man
The engine? Certainly not.

Old Man
Why not?

Young Man
Because its performance is not personal. It is a result of the law of its construction. It is not a *merit* that it does the things which it is set to do—it can't *help* doing them.

Old Man
And it is not a personal demerit in the stone machine that it does so little?

Young Man
Certainly not. It does no more and no less than the law of its make permits and compels it to do. There is nothing *personal* about it; it cannot choose. In this process of "working up to the matter" is it your idea to work up to the proposition that a man and a machine are about the same thing, and that there is no personal merit in the performance of either?

Old Man
Yes—but do not be offended; I am meaning no offense. What makes the grand difference between the stone engine and the steel one? Shall we call it training, education? Shall we call the stone engine a savage and the steel one a civilized man? The original rock contained the stuff of which the steel one was built—but along with it a lot of sulfur and stone and other obstructing inborn heredities brought down from the old geologic ages—prejudices, let us call them. Prejudices which nothing within the rock itself had either *power* to remove or any *desire* to remove.

The Pen Is Mightier

Questions from IQ tests administered to U.S. Army recruits during World War I

1) The most prominent industry of Minneapolis is:

Ⓐ Flour
Ⓑ Packing
Ⓒ Automobiles
Ⓓ Brewing

2) An air-cooled engine is used in the:

Ⓐ Buick
Ⓑ Packard
Ⓒ Franklin
Ⓓ Ford

3) Why does it pay to get a good education?

Ⓐ It makes a man more useful and happy
Ⓑ It makes work for teachers
Ⓒ It makes demand for buildings for schools and colleges

4) If you are lost in a forest in the daytime, what is the thing to do?

Ⓐ Hurry to the nearest house you know of
Ⓑ Look for something to eat
Ⓒ Use the sun or a compass for a guide

5) It is better to fight than to run, because:

Ⓐ Cowards are shot
Ⓑ It is more honorable
Ⓒ If you run you may get shot in the back

6) Why is beef better food than cabbage?

Ⓐ It tastes better
Ⓑ It is more nourishing
Ⓒ It is harder to obtain

Answer key: 1) A 2) C 3) A 4) C 5) B 6) B

Prejudices which must be removed by *outside influences* or not at all. The iron's prejudice against ridding itself of the cumbering rock. To make it more exact, the iron's absolute *indifference* as to whether the rock be removed or not. Then comes the *outside influence* and grinds the rock to powder and sets the ore free. The *iron* in the ore is still captive. An *outside influence* smelts it free of the clogging ore. The iron is emancipated iron now, but indifferent to further progress. An *outside influence* beguiles it into the Bessemer furnace and refines it into steel of the first quality. It is educated now—its training is complete. And it has reached its limit. By no possible process can it be educated into *gold*. There are gold men, and tin men, and copper men, and leaden men, and steel men, and so on—and each has the limitations of his nature, his heredities, his training, and his environment. You can build engines out of each of these metals, and they will all perform, but you must not require the weak ones to do equal work with the stronger ones. In each case, to get the best results you must free the metal from its obstructing prejudicial ores by education—smelting, refining, and so forth.

The tax which will be paid for the purpose of education is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests, and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance.

—Thomas Jefferson, 1786

Young Man
You have arrived at man now?

Old Man
Yes. Man the machine—man the impersonal engine. Whatsoever a man is, is due to his *make* and to the *influences* brought to bear upon it by his heredities, his habitat, his associations. He is moved, directed, *commanded* by *exterior* influences—*solely*. He *originates* nothing himself—not even an opinion, not even a thought.

Young Man
Oh, come! Where did I get my opinion that this which you are talking is all foolishness?

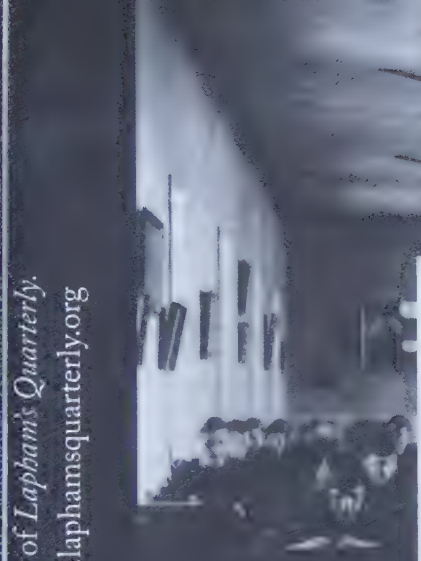
Old Man
It is a quite natural opinion—indeed an inevitable opinion—but *you* did not create the materials out of which it is formed. They are odds and ends of thoughts, impressions, feelings, gathered unconsciously from a thousand books, a thousand conversations, and from streams of thought and feeling which have flowed down into your heart and brain out of the hearts and brains of ten centuries of ancestors. *Personally* you did not create even the smallest microscopic fragment of the materials out of which your opinion is made, and personally you cannot claim even the slender merit of *putting the borrowed materials together*. That was done—*automatically*—by your mental machinery, in strict accordance with the law of that machinery's construction. And you not only did not make that machinery yourself, but you have *not even any command over it*.

Young Man
This is too much. You think I could have formed no opinion but that one?

Old Man
Spontaneously? No. And *you did not form that one*; your machinery did it for you—automatically and instantly, without reflection or the need of it.

Young Man
It's an exasperating subject. The *first* man had original thoughts, anyway; there was nobody to draw from.

Old Man
It is a mistake. Adam's thoughts came to him from the outside. *You* have a fear of death. You did not invent that—you got it from outside, from talk and teaching. Adam had no fear of death—none in the world.



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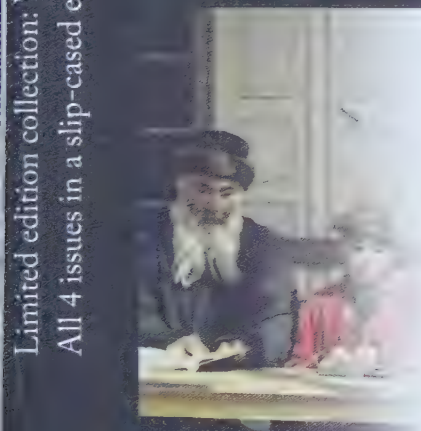

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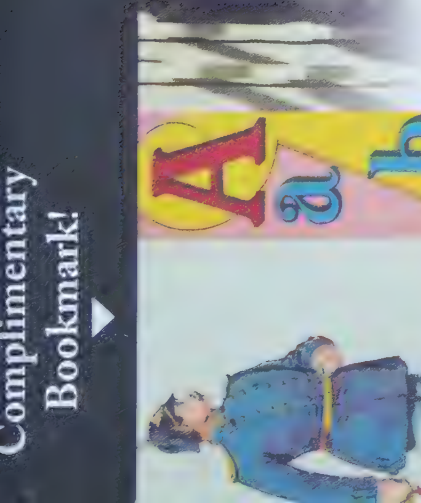

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Young Man
Yes he had.

Old Man
When he was created?

Young Man
No.

Old Man
When, then?

Young Man
When he was threatened with it.

Old Man
Then it came from the *outside*. Adam is quite big enough; let us not try to make a god of him. *None but gods have ever had a thought which did not come from the outside.* Adam probably had a good head, but it was of no sort of use to him until it was filled up *from the outside*. He was not able to invent the trifling-est little thing with it. He had not a shadow of a notion of the difference between good and evil—he had to get the idea *from the outside*. Neither he nor Eve was able to originate the idea that it was immodest to go naked: the knowledge came in with the apple *from the outside*. A man's brain is so constructed that *it can originate nothing whatever*. It can only use material obtained *outside*. It is merely a machine, and it works automatically, not by will-power. *It has no command over itself, its owner has no command over it.*

Young Man
Well, never mind Adam, but certainly Shakespeare's creations—

Old Man
No, you mean Shakespeare's *imitations*. Shakespeare created nothing. He correctly observed and he marvelously painted. He exactly portrayed people whom *God* had created but he created none himself. Let us spare him the slander of charging him with trying. Shakespeare could not create. *He was a machine and machines do not create.*

Young Man
Where *was* his excellence, then?

Old Man
In this: he was not a sewing machine like you and me; he was a Gobelin loom. The threads and the colors came into him *from the outside*; outside influences, suggestions, *experiences* (reading, seeing plays, playing plays, borrowing ideas, and so on) framed the patterns in his mind and started up its complex and admirable machinery, and *it automatically* churned out that pictured and gorgeous fabric which still compels the astonishment of the world. If Shakespeare had been born and bred on a barren and unvisited rock in the ocean his mighty intellect would have had no *outside material* to work with, and could have invented none; and *no outside influences*, teachings, moldings, persuasions, inspirations, of a valuable sort, and could have invented none; and so, Shakespeare would have produced nothing. In Turkey he would have produced something—something up to the highest limit of Turkish influences, associations and training. In France he would have produced something better—something up to the highest limit of the French influences and training. In England he rose to the highest limit attainable through the *outside helps afforded by that land's ideals, influences, and training*. You and I are but sewing machines. We must turn out what we can; we must do our endeavor, and care nothing at all when the unthinking reproach us for not turning out Gobelins.

From "What is Man?" After his older brother bought the Hannibal Journal *in 1851, Samuel Clemens set type and wrote sketches for the paper. He left home in 1853 at the age of seventeen, piloting steamboats on the Mississippi River and panning for gold in Nevada, before writing again for a newspaper in 1863 under the name "Mark Twain." In 1935 Ernest Hemingway conceded, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called* Huckleberry Finn."

1851: Concord

USEFUL IGNORANCE

We have heard of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. It is said that knowledge is power, and the like. Methinks there is equal need of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Ignorance, what we will call Beautiful Knowledge, a knowledge useful in a higher sense: For what is most of our boasted so-called knowledge but a conceit that we know something, which robs us of the advantage of our actual ignorance? What we call knowledge is often our positive ignorance, ignorance our negative knowledge. By long years of patient industry and reading of the newspapers—for what are the libraries of science but files of newspapers?—a man accumulates a myriad facts, lays them up in his memory, and then when in some spring of his life he saunters abroad into the great fields of thought, he, as it were, goes to grass like a horse and leaves all his harness behind in the stable. I would say to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, sometimes, "Go to grass. You have eaten hay long enough. The spring has come with its green crop." The very cows are driven to their country pastures before the end of May, though I have heard of one unnatural farmer who kept his cow in the barn and fed her on hay all the year round. So, frequently, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge treats its cattle.

The poet's aim is either to profit or to please, or to blend in one the delightful and the useful. Whatever the lesson you would convey, be brief, that your hearers may catch quickly what is said and faithfully retain it. Every superfluous word is spilled from the too-full memory.

—Horace, c. 19 BC

A man's ignorance sometimes is not only useful but beautiful—while his knowledge, so called, is oftentimes worse than useless, beside being ugly. Which is the best man to deal with: He who knows nothing about a subject, and, what is extremely rare, knows that he knows nothing, or he who really knows something about it but thinks that he knows all?

My desire for knowledge is intermittent, but my desire to bathe my head in atmospheres unknown to my feet is perennial and constant. The highest that we can attain to is not knowledge but sympathy with intelligence. I do not know that this higher knowledge amounts to anything more definite than a novel and grand surprise on a sudden revelation of the insufficiency of all that we called knowledge before—a discovery that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. It is the lighting up of the mist by the sun. Man cannot *know* in any higher sense than this, any more than he can look serenely and with impunity in the face of the sun. "You will not perceive that, as perceiving a particular thing," say the Chaldean Oracles.

There is something servile in the habit of seeking after a law which we may obey. We may study the laws of matter at and for our convenience, but a successful life knows no law. It is an unfortunate discovery certainly, that of a law which binds us where we did not know before that we were bound. Live free, child of the mist—and with respect to knowledge we are all children of the mist. The man who takes the liberty to live is superior to all the laws by virtue of his relation to the lawmaker. "That is active duty," says the Vishnu Purana, "which is not for our bondage; that is knowledge which is for our liberation. All other duty is good only unto weariness; all other knowledge is only the cleverness of an artist."

Henry David Thoreau, *from "Walking." Best known for his book* Walden, *a reflection upon the virtues of simplicity and self-reliance published in 1854, Thoreau in his youth worked for his father's pencil-making business. In 1838 he founded a small progressive school with his brother John, but after three years, Thoreau realized he was a poet, not a schoolmaster.*

c. 524: Rome

MAKING IMPRESSIONS

Sometimes the Porch has brought into the world
Some very obscure old philosophers,
Such as think sensible images
From bodies outside themselves
Are impressed upon men's minds;
As at times with swiftly moving stylus
Men are used to print the blank space of a page
Which has no marks
With impressed letters.
But if the mind, with the strength of its proper motions,
Nothing unfolds,
But merely passive lies
Subject to other bodies' marks,
And like a mirror but reflects
The empty images of things,
Whence then this all-discerning common concept's strength
In the minds of men?
What power singulars perceives,
Or what power all things known divides?
Things thus divided what collects again,
And taking either way in turn
Now lifts its head to highest things
And now to lowest things descends,
Then to itself returning
Falsehood refutes with truth?
This is an efficient cause
More powerful by far
Than that which passively receives
Only the impressed marks on things material.
Yet there precedes,
To stir and move the powers of the mind,
Emotive movement in the living body,
As when light strikes the eyes,
Or a cry in the ears resounds.
Then the mind's wakened power,
Calling upon these forms it holds within
To similar motions,
Applies them to the marks received from without
And joins those images
To the forms hidden within.

Boethius, *from* Consolation of Philosophy. *Appointed consul in 510 by Theodoric the Great, Boethius was convicted of treason by association in 522. While awaiting his eventual execution in prison, he wrote his* Consolation, *a personal and philosophical meditation on the idea of "the good," which Edward Gibbon judged "not unworthy of the leisure of Plato."*

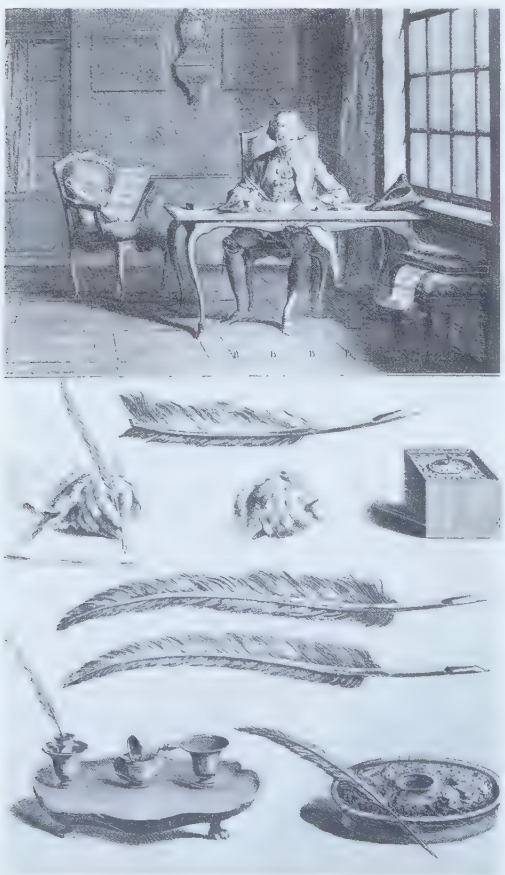
c. 1854: Cambridge

NEGATIVE STANDARD

For generation after generation, Adamses and Brookses and Boylstons and Gorhams had gone to Harvard College, and although none of them, as far as known, had ever done any good there, or thought himself the better for it, custom, social ties, convenience, and above all economy kept each generation in the track. Any other education would have required a serious effort, but no one took Harvard College seriously. All went there because their friends went there and the College was their ideal of social self-respect.

Harvard College, as far as it educated at all, was a mild and liberal school which sent young men into the world with all they needed to make respectable citizens and something of what they wanted to make useful ones. Leaders of men it never tried to make. Its ideals were altogether different. The Unitarian clergy had given to the College a character of moderation, balance, judgment, restraint, what the French called *mesure*: excellent traits which the College attained with singular success so that its graduates could commonly be recognized by the stamp, but such a type of character rarely lent itself to autobiography. Four years of Harvard College, if successful, resulted in an autobiographical blank, a mind on which only a watermark had been stamped.

The Art of Writing (Man), from Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, 1751.



The stamp, as such things went, was a good one. The chief wonder of education is that it does not ruin everybody concerned in it, teachers and taught. Sometimes in afterlife, Adams debated whether in fact it had not ruined him and most of his companions, but disappointment apart, Harvard College was probably less hurtful than any other university then in existence. It taught little, and that little ill, but it left the mind open, free from bias, ignorant of facts, but docile. The graduate had few strong prejudices. He knew little but his mind remained supple, ready to receive knowledge.

The class of 1858, to which Henry Adams belonged, was a typical collection of young New Englanders, quietly penetrating and aggressively commonplace; free from meannesses, jealousies, intrigues, enthusiasms, and passions; not exceptionally quick; not consciously skeptical; singularly indifferent to display, artifice, florid expression, but not hostile to it when it amused them; distrustful of themselves, but little disposed to trust anyone else; with not much humor of their own, but full of readiness to enjoy the humor of others; negative to a degree that in the long run became positive and triumphant. Not harsh in manners or judgment, rather liberal and open-minded, they were still as a body the most formidable critics one would care to meet in a long life exposed to criticism. They never flattered, seldom praised; free from vanity, they were not intolerant of it; but they were objectiveness itself; their attitude was a law of nature; their judgment beyond appeal, not an act either of intellect or emotion or of will but a sort of gravitation.

This was Harvard College incarnate, but even for Harvard College, the class of 1858 was somewhat extreme. Of unity this band of nearly one hundred young men had no keen sense, but they had equally little energy of repulsion. They were pleasant to live with, and above the average of students—German, French, English, or whatnot—but chiefly because each individual appeared satisfied to stand alone. It seemed a sign of force; yet to stand alone is quite natural when one has no passions, still easier when one has no pains.

If the student got little from his mates, he got little more from his masters. The four years passed at college were, for his purposes, wasted. Harvard College was a good school, but at bottom what the boy disliked most was any school at all. He did not want to be one in a hundred—1 percent of an education. He regarded himself as the only person for whom his education had value, and he wanted the whole of it. He got barely half of an average. Long afterward, when the devious path of life led him back to teach in his turn what no student naturally cared or needed to know, he diverted some dreary hours of faculty meetings by looking up his record in the class lists and found himself graded precisely in the middle. In the one branch he most needed—mathematics—barring the few first scholars, failure was so nearly universal that no attempt at grading could have had value, and whether he stood fortieth or ninetieth must have been an accident or the personal favor of the professor. Here his education failed lamentably. At best he could never have been a mathematician, at worst he would never have cared to be one; but he needed to read mathematics, like any other universal language, and he never reached the alphabet.

Beyond two or three Greek plays, the student got nothing from the ancient languages. Beyond some incoherent theories of free trade and protection, he got little from political economy. He could not afterward remember to have heard the name of Karl Marx mentioned, or the title of *Capital*. He was equally ignorant of Auguste Comte. These were the two writers of his time who most influenced its thought. The bit of practical teaching he afterward reviewed with most curiosity was the course in chemistry, which taught him a number of theories that befogged his mind for a lifetime. The only teaching that appealed to his imagination was a course of lectures by Louis Agassiz on the glacial period and palaeontology, which had more influence on his curiosity than the rest of the college instruction altogether. The entire work of the four years could have been easily put into the work of any four months in afterlife.

Harvard College was a negative force, and negative forces have value. Slowly it weakened the violent political bias of childhood, not by putting interests in its place, but by mental habits which had no bias at all. It would also have weakened the literary bias if Adams had been capable of finding other amusement, but the climate kept him steady to desultory and useless reading, till he had run through libraries of volumes which he forgot even to their title pages. Rather by instinct than by guidance, he turned to writing, and his professors or tutors occasionally gave his English composition a hesitating approval; but in that branch, as in all the rest, even when he made a long struggle for recognition, he never convinced his teachers that his abilities, at their best, warranted placing him on the rank list, among the first third of his class. Instructors generally reach a fairly accurate gauge of their scholars' powers. Henry Adams himself held the opinion that his instructors were very nearly right, and when he became a professor in his turn and made mortifying mistakes in ranking his scholars, he still obstinately insisted that on the whole, he was not far wrong. Student or professor, he accepted the negative standard because it was the standard of the school.

Henry Adams, *from* The Education of Henry Adams. *A direct patrilineal descendant of John Adams and John Quincy Adams, Henry was a journalist, novelist, biographer, and historian. His nine-volume* History of the United States During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison *has been called "the finest historical writing ever done by an American." He wrote his* Education *in 1906, died in 1918, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize posthumously in 1919.*

THE COLLEGE IDEA

by Andrew Delbanco

On my campus is a handsome domed building with these words inscribed across its facade: ERECTED FOR THE STUDENTS THAT RELIGION AND LEARNING MAY GO HAND IN HAND AND CHARACTER GROW WITH KNOWLEDGE. Built about a hundred years ago, the structure is in reasonably good repair, but the purpose for which it was built (it still houses the office of the university chaplain) is in ruins. I've never met a student who knows what's written above the door.

Religion and learning hand in hand? This is true at only a few sectarian institutions, and if you were to remind just about any university president that his or her own institution arose from this or that denomination—Congregationalism (Harvard and Yale); Presbyterianism (Princeton); Episcopalianism (Columbia)—you'd likely get the response of the proverbial Victorian lady who, upon hearing of Darwin's claim that men descend from apes, replied that she hoped it wasn't so, but if it were, that it not become widely known. As for the claim that "character" and knowledge should grow together, if you ask just about any student how college makes that happen, the most you're likely to get is a raised eyebrow or a puzzled stare.

The truth is that today the domed building is a monument to an endangered idea: the college idea. In fact, that idea was already in trouble when the building went up. Even then the words were more commemorative than descriptive, concerned with reclaiming a threatened purpose ("erected for the students") and connection ("character grow with knowledge"). The undergraduate college within Columbia University was still at least nominally focused on the task of developing Christian gentlemen, but was slipping into the encroaching shadow of a vast research enterprise that has since surrounded and, some would say, swallowed it.

Most of the new university buildings constructed during the first quarter of the twentieth century were meant for advanced study of a particular discipline such as mathematics or chemistry, or a profession such as law. Over the intervening century, the college survived and developed a post-Christian form of general education—the well-known Columbia Core Curriculum in which undergraduates still read great books from Homer to Dostoyevsky, including parts of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. But that curriculum is subject to

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King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2002. Photograph by Christopher Morris.

continual attack on grounds both ideological (too male and "Eurocentric") and financial (discussion-sized classes are very expensive). On a campus mainly devoted to research and graduate training, those of us who focus on college teaching sometimes feel like Jonah in the belly of the whale.

This is not a local or peculiar story. Although the relation between college and university may be more disproportionate at Columbia than at comparable institutions (among the leading universities, Princeton has kept the balance best), it is a representative story. It begins with the fact that colleges and universities, even when they share a campus and a name, embody fundamentally different purposes. A college—whose students, ideally, live on or near campus—is about transmitting to young adults knowledge of the past so they may draw upon it as a living resource in the future. A university is a disparate array of research activities that is about creating new knowledge with the aim of superseding the past.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, education was mostly about the first and very little about the second. Colleges were small and sectarian, while universities barely existed. After the Civil War, everything changed. Many colleges, where students had typically taken a common curriculum leading to a capstone course on moral philosophy taught by the college president, went out of business. Those that survived had to come to terms with the fact that industrial society wanted specialists with technical knowledge more than generalists with Biblical or classical learning. To meet the need, Congress made grants of federal land in order to fund the establishment of public universities for the purpose of advancing agricultural techniques in the undeveloped West. In the East, private philanthropists funded new institutions modeled on the renowned German universities of the day, where academic freedom prevailed and research laboratories as well as graduate seminars attained their modern form. The first such distinguished American university, Johns Hopkins, initially took in no undergraduate students at all. And soon, old (by American standards) institutions such as Harvard and Columbia, though they retained their undergraduate colleges, began to turn themselves into universities, too.

The first president of Hopkins, Daniel Coit Gilman, defined the new educational objective as showing students "how to extend, even by minute accretions, the realm of knowledge." The most influential advocate of the new pedagogy was Charles William Eliot, a chemist who became president of Harvard. In the 1870s he introduced an elective system by which college students could choose courses according to their talents and interests rather than, as in the past, follow a curriculum common to all. Eventually even conservative faculty came to appreciate the new system, since it freed them to teach subjects in which they were expert, and thus brought their teaching into conformity with their research. The distinction between undergraduate and graduate students, whose number was increasing, was breaking down.

Eliot thought that "concentration" (the word Harvard still uses today instead of the more common term "major") should begin in college, whose job is "to store up the accumulated knowledge of the race" so that "each successive generation of youth shall start with all the advantages which their predecessors have won." On this view, all of human history becomes a sort of relay race in which no runner is required to travel trodden ground. The efficacy of the principle is confirmed every day by the large number of undergraduates who now master at least the first stages of calculus—even though it took several millennia before mankind produced the two seventeenth-century geniuses (Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz) who developed it independently. We take the fact for granted, but it is a stunning vindication of the scientific premise that knowledge is incremental and accretive: that once a new truth is discovered, it does not have to be rediscovered but can be passed on to those capable of grasping and, most importantly, extending it.

Given the evidence, it is hardly surprising that science is now the driving force in our

universities. It has proven itself. It possesses a means—the experimental method—by which its claims can be tested. It has an obvious impact (not always benign, to be sure) on the lives of virtually everyone living and yet to be born. Transistors, lasers, computers, diagnostic machines, medical therapies, alternative sources of energy (we hope)—the list goes on and on of what constitutes, from one point of view, the "return" on public and private investment in education. If we include the "hard" social sciences under the rubric of science, then it can also be credited with devising rational principles for legal and financial systems, managing the infrastructure of transport and commerce, and promoting public health.

So what does all this mean for those of us in academia who, recognizing the achievements of the modern university and harboring no nostalgia for the days of official religion, still hold to the college principle "that character should grow with knowledge"? Science, unfortunately, is no help here. We cannot appropriate its principle of progress and say that Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year,* published in 1722, or Albert Camus's *La Peste,* published in 1947, tells us more about the disease than did Thucydides' commentary on the plague at Athens, written in the fifth century BC. Or that James Joyce's *Ulysses,* written at the outset of the twentieth century, gives a more complete account of experience than did the *Odyssey,* probably composed more than two and half millennia earlier.

Science, moreover, tells us nothing about how to shape a life or how to face death, about the meaning of love, or the degrees of responsibility. It not only fails to answer such questions; it cannot ask them. Some people believe that someday it will do both—that in some future age of "consilience," neuroscience will define and ensure happiness and prove or disprove the insights of religion into the nature of sin and salvation; biochemistry will distinguish truth from falsity among what today are mere opinions about sex and gender; all human choices will become susceptible to experimental testing and rational sorting. Maybe it will happen, but none of us will be around when it does, and I'm not sure I want to be.

Meanwhile, we are left with what are customarily called the humanities—literature, history, philosophy, and the arts—as the best means for coming to grips with such questions, which have always had a special urgency for young people of college age. In my ramblings through various college archives, I came across a diary kept by a student at a small Methodist school, Emory and Henry College, in southwest Virginia. On a winter evening in 1850 after attending a lecture—really a sermon—by the college president that left him troubled and apprehensive, he made the following entry in his journal. "Oh that the Lord would show me," he wrote to himself, "how to think and how to choose." That poignant sentence—poised somewhere between a wish and a plea—has an archaic sound, but I can't imagine a better formulation, then or now, of what college should be: an aid to reflection, a place and process whereby young people take stock of their talents and passions and begin to sort out their lives in a way true to themselves and responsible to others.

> *Anyone who has a child should train him to be either a physicist or a ballet dancer. Then he'll escape.* —*W.H. Auden, 1947*

For many if not most students, God is no longer the object of the plea, or if he is, they do not attend a college where everyone worships the same god in the same way. Religion today is so much a matter of private conscience and the number of punishable infractions on a college campus so few (even rules against the academic sin of plagiarism are only loosely enforced) that most contemporary students would be astonished if a teacher or dean presumed to intervene in their private lives with a doctrinal or moral correction. The era of spiritual authority belonging to the college is long and well gone. Yet that is all the more reason why colleges, committed as they are to toleration and diversity, ought to do everything they can to

excite their students' interest in works of literature and art that register their longings and yet exceed what they are able to articulate by and for themselves. Such encounters are among the indispensable experiences of the fulfilled life, and colleges have an undiminished—indeed, an augmented—obligation to coax and prod students in their direction.

Yet they do so less and less. Practitioners of the humanities, as everyone knows, have lost

There's no book so bad that something good may not be found in it.

—Miguel de Cervantes, 1615

much of their standing in the academy. Why has this happened? Partly, no doubt, because of changes in the larger culture that colleges can do little to arrest: particularly the decline of reading in an age saturated by digitized noise, where few people have the time or concentration to linger with a long or difficult book. And in a culture where affluence is both the norm and an elusive goal, students feel relentless pressure to please the professional school admissions committee or the corporate hiring committee with evidence of proficiency in some practical subject like economics, while subjects that were once at the center of a liberal education—literature, art, philosophy, music—are consigned to the peripheral category of "enrichment."

But humanists cannot blame their fallen status entirely on that exculpatory abstraction, culture. They have damaged themselves by the desperate combination of emulation and repudiation with which they have reacted to the rise of science. At first they aped the scientists by trying to turn language and history into phenomena susceptible to objective description. When the new universities appeared in the late nineteenth century, humanists tried to claim a place for themselves by describing language as if it could be studied in much the way their scientific colleagues studied the properties of gas or light in the lab next door. The name of the new discipline, which arose in Germany, was philology. This was the era, too, of "scientific" history—also of German provenance—the idea that empirical investigation could establish laws that govern human behavior over time with no less consistency and predictability than the laws of physics.

Those days of chasing the phantom of objectivity are now far behind us. Humanists today are mostly to be found at the opposite extreme—denying the very idea of truth by asserting, with varying degrees of "postmodern" irony, that all putative truths are contingent and all values relative. But the result is the same: the humanities have marginalized themselves in the universities, which creates an inevitable trickle-down effect in the colleges, since today virtually all college faculty members must have earned a Ph.D. degree in a research university, which provides little training or encouragement to become truly effective—and affective—teachers.

All the skills and strategies that faculty need for rising in the academic hierarchy—publishing frequently, performing at conferences, and (most important for raising one's salary) currying offers from rival institutions—have nothing to do, and are often at odds, with a commitment to undergraduate teaching. The waste and shame is increasingly evident in independent liberal arts colleges as well as in research universities. Some fifty years ago Clark Kerr, the man who supervised the vast mid-century expansion of the University of California—an expansion so large that he felt a new word, "multiversity," was needed to describe it—pointed out the "cruel paradox that a superior faculty results in an inferior concern for undergraduate teaching." Forty years earlier, Max Weber, in his famous lecture on "Science as a Vocation," noted that "one can be a preeminent scholar and at the same time an abominably poor teacher." And if we go back further still, to the 1840s, we find Ralph Waldo Emerson protesting against the self-replicating clubbiness of the Harvard faculty by remarking, "A college professor should be elected by setting all the candidates loose on a miscellaneous gang of young men taken at large from

the street. He who could get the ear of these youths after a certain number of hours... should be the professor."

What all these critics have in common is the conviction that the true teacher is a person inflamed, even possessed, in a way that can never be certified by any advanced degree. The philosopher William James—whose student George Santayana saw him as hesitant and halting in the classroom until "the spirit would sometimes come upon him, and leaning his head on his hand, he would let fall golden words, picturesque, fresh from the heart, full of the knowledge of good and evil"—spoke of "the Ph.D. Octopus," as if the whole university apparatus were a kind of predatory monster. Of course we want our teachers to be informed and disciplined (James was both) as well as fervent, and there is no contradiction, in theory, between good scholarship and good pedagogy. In fact, it is when the two converge that the dividing line between university and college is erased—as when college students are afforded the chance to work in a laboratory with a "cutting-edge" scientist or to assist a scholar with "ground-breaking" work (terms of praise that would have been incomprehensible before the rise of the university). Nor should we imagine that the only effective form of teaching is the Socratic form of small-group discussion. "Truly speaking," as Emerson put it, "it is not instruction but provocation that I can receive from another soul." This is the hallmark of the great lecturer, who may not pause for Q & A, or even know the students' names, but whose example of total immersion in the subject creates the moving spectacle of what Emerson called "Man Thinking." It is for that reason that several generations of Columbia students—undergraduates and graduates alike—flocked to hear the great art historian Meyer Schapiro, whose glowing eyes and transported smile as he spoke of Paul Cézanne or Wassily Kandinsky led more than one student to say, "Whatever he's smoking, I'll have some."

Whether the great books and works of art make their debut in the lives of students in a seminar room or a lecture hall, they have an incomparable power to make the past seem not only less remote but not even past. They are antidotes to loneliness. I remember how, when I first read the *Iliad* with a group of Columbia freshmen (we call them "first-years" now), there came a moment after all our discussion of Homeric similes and the formulaic structure of oral poetry and the mythic origin of national identity when suddenly we felt as if we were reading about ourselves—or at least, if we were male—our childhood selves. It happened when we arrived at the image with which Homer describes the Trojan soldiers overrunning their Greek enemies: "They streamed over / in massed formation, with Apollo in front of them holding / the tremendous aegis, and wrecked the bastions of the Achaians / easily, as when a little boy piles sand by the sea-shore / when in his innocent play he makes sand towers to amuse him / and then, still playing, with hands and feet ruins them and wrecks them." Apparently, little boys on the shores of the Aegean three thousand years ago did the same thing as little boys do today at Jones Beach or the Hamptons (social class is not, in this case, a salient variable). As to whether little girls are less keen to build, then smash—we can leave that question to the neuroscientists.

> *The great difficulty in education is to get experience out of ideas.*
>
> —*George Santayana, 1905*

Whatever the explanation for such transhistorical truths, the humanities speak to us in a subversive whisper that says the idea of progress is a sham. The humanities tell us that the questions we face under the shadow of death are not new, and that no new technology will help us answer them. They are hard and serious questions. Does Achilles' concept of honor in the *Iliad* retain any force for us today? Can one bear to live according to Thoreau's ethic of minimal exploitation of nature? Is there a basis in experience for the Augustinian idea of original sin? Such questions do not admit

of verifiable or replicable answers because the experiment to which we must subject them is the experiment of our own lives.

So what are the prospects that this sort of education will remain central to the mission of our colleges in the twenty-first century? There are strong forces working against it. In response to the challenge of global competition, major universities are expanding (Yale is developing a new research campus in West Haven; Harvard is building across the Charles River; Columbia in Harlem; Penn in an undeveloped area adjacent to its current campus), partly in order to accommodate the foreign students who will be the next generation of the international elite from whom American universities hope to draw contributions to the alumni fund.

Sheer institutional growth has never been good for humanistic education. It makes small classes hard to sustain, not only because of the expense (low faculty-student ratios require high instructional budgets) but also because humanities faculties are not keeping pace with the sciences—a trend likely to quicken in part because students from abroad usually come for technical training rather than for the collegiate experience. Moreover, there is growing pressure, both because of faculty ideology and because growing numbers of students are foreign-born or of non-Western descent, to introduce texts from other cultures. This is all to the good when it is supplementary rather than substitutional. But given the zero-sum principle that applies to any curriculum (put something new in, take something old out), chances are that reading the constitutive books of the Western tradition will continue to decline.

Why, in the end, should we care? Anthony T. Kronman gives a good answer in his recent book, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life.* A former dean of Yale Law School, who now teaches in a Great Books program in Yale College, Kronman makes a passionate case for how important it is that students should grasp the fundamental ideas that constitute Western culture in its ideal form:

> The ideals of individual freedom and toleration; of democratic government; of respect for the rights of minorities and for human rights generally; a reliance on markets as a mechanism for the organization of economic life and a recognition of the need for markets to be regulated by a supervenient political authority; a reliance, in the political realm, on the methods of bureaucratic administration, with its formal division of functions and legal separation of office from officeholder; an acceptance of the truths of modern science and the ubiquitous employment of its technological products: all these provide, in many parts of the world, the existing foundations of political, social, and economic life, and where they do not, they are viewed as aspirational goals toward which everyone has the strongest moral and material reasons to strive.

Surely, every college graduate ought to understand something about the genealogy of these ideas and practices, something also about the historical processes from which they have emerged, about the tragic cost when societies fail to defend them, and yes, about alternative ideas both within the Western tradition and outside it.

The proposition accords with the Jeffersonian argument that democracy, if it is to survive, requires an educated citizenry aware of the necessary balance between rights and responsibilities. Given the perennial presence of demagogues and would-be autocrats, the argument is as strong now as it was when Jefferson made it more than two centuries ago. In fact, in a world where science has conferred on us previously unimaginable powers—the power to poison or preserve the earth, to engineer genetic changes in our own species for better or worse—it is more urgent than ever that the rising generations learn how "to think and how to choose." College in the endangered sense of the word is still the most likely place for that to begin to happen.

Children at a model kindergarten in Pyongyang, North Korea, 1979. Photograph by Hiroji Kubota.

ACADEMIC VIRTUE

by Stanley Fish

Not long ago, there was a time when I was responsible for a college with close to thirty departments and units, a budget of between fifty and fifty-five million dollars, four hundred tenure-track faculty members, seven hundred staff, ten thousand undergraduate students, two thousand graduate students, and seventeen buildings. On any given day, I had to deal with disciplinary proceedings, tenure and promotion cases, faculty searches, chair searches, enrollment problems, fundraising, community outreach, alumni relations, public relations, curriculum reform, counteroffers, technology failures, space allocation, information systems, chair meetings, advisory committee meetings, deans council meetings, meetings with the provost, student complaints, faculty complaints, parent complaints, and taxpayer complaints. Office hours were 8:30 A.M. to whenever and often extended into the evenings and weekends. Vacations were few and far between. The pressure never relaxed.

When I left the job after slightly more than five years, I felt that I had all the time (well, not quite all) in the world at my disposal, and for awhile, spent it by trying to improve everyone I met, whether or not those I ministered to

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welcomed my efforts. Although I was no longer a dean, I couldn't shake the habit of being at the office every day, all day. Because I had nothing particular to do, I roamed the halls looking for things that were wrong, and I found them.

Stray pieces of furniture you couldn't give away sat (or sprawled) in front of an office door. I stuck my head in and informed the occupant (why did he or she listen to me?) that the offending items must be removed by the end of the day. Continuing down the halls, I found the panels separating two elevators festooned with announcements of lectures that took place two years ago. I proceeded to rip the leaflets down. Halfway through I decided that no one should be posting anything there anyway; so I removed every announcement, no matter how current, and for good measure, I tore away the surface the announcements adhered to and threw all the thumbtacks and pushpins into the trash.

Knowledge is a polite word for dead but not buried imagination. —e.e. cummings, 1951

But then it was time to go to class (I was still teaching), where, in an enclosed space, my students received the full force of my reforming zeal. I told them that I hadn't the slightest interest in whatever opinions they might have and didn't want to hear any. I told them that while they may have been taught that the purpose of writing is to express oneself, the selves they had were not worth expressing, and that it would be good if they actually learned something. I told them that on the basis of their performance so far they should sue their previous teachers for malpractice. I told them that anyone who says, "I know it, but I can't explain it," would flunk the course.

After an hour and a half they escaped, except for one of them, who came to my office for further instruction. Although it was the end of the third week, she was still not quite sure about the structure of the basic English sentence. I took her through the subject and predicate slots and she seemed to understand who or what an actor is and the relationship of the actor to the action performed, but she couldn't quite get the concept of the object of the action.

We were working with a sentence she had composed, "I threw the book into the garbage." I asked her, "In that sentence what is the relationship between 'threw' and 'book'?" She didn't know. I tried again: "What is the impact on the object of the action?" She didn't understand the question.

I decided that an illustration might do the trick, so I picked up a book on my desk and threw it. It hit a shelf of books a few feet away. She said nothing for a few seconds and then asked in a voice calmer than mine would have been, "Can I drop this course?" "Yes," I answered (hoping to escape prosecution), and she left—the one person in the entire week who managed to get away.

What is this all about? I wondered. What's driving me to do these things? I got part of the answer by looking up obsessive-compulsive disorder on the Internet and running down the list of symptoms. (Checking to see whether you have OCD is a form of OCD.) I found the following matches: fear of dirt; a need to have things just so; preoccupation with rules and schedules; rigidity; inflexibility; concern with order and symmetry; and saving containers when they are no longer needed. A perfect score.

And then it occurred to me that those are the very characteristics that make a dean effective: an obsessive need "to have things just so," a need to have things that are not right put right.

What could I do aside from harassing perfectly innocent people who would have had every right to have me committed? Write. Although I was no longer in charge of a liberal arts college, I could satisfy my need to put the world in order by telling anyone who would listen how it should be done.

The first job, I decided, was to define the task. No serious reflection about an activity can get off the ground until the activity is characterized in a way that distinguishes it from all other activities.

It is when academics either don't know or have forgotten exactly what it is they are supposed to do that trouble begins, and criticisms of the academic enterprise multiply. These days, every-

one, whether speaking from the left or the right, says the same thing—colleges and universities are in a sorry state, and ideology is the problem. One group finds ideology in the efforts of activists like David Horowitz, who wishes to monitor and alter the political make-up of the faculty, especially in the humanities and social sciences; while the other group finds ideology in the inability or unwillingness (these are two different arguments) of liberal faculty members to refrain from imposing their political views on students.

There's a lot of huffing and puffing on either side, and while I'm not writing to say, "A plague on both your houses," I am writing with the intention of carefully parsing the terms central to the controversy. Not because I hope to solve problems but because I hope to dissolve them, to suggest that the problems pretty much go away when you understand and act on a simple imperative—"Do your job"—which comes along with two corollary imperatives—"Don't do somebody else's job," and, "Don't let someone else do your job."

So let us begin with a simple question. What exactly is the job of higher education and what is it that those who teach in colleges and universities are trained and paid to do?

A faculty committee report submitted long ago to the president of the University of Chicago declares that the university exists "only for the limited... purposes of teaching and research" and reasons that "since the university is a community only for those limited and distinctive purposes, it is a community which cannot take collective action on the issues of the day without endangering the conditions for its existence and effectiveness." Of course it can and should take collective (and individual) action on those issues relevant to the educational mission—the integrity of scholarship, the evil of plagiarism, and the value of a liberal education. But neither the university as a collective nor its faculty as individuals should advocate personal, political, moral, or any other kind of views except academic views.

The job of someone who teaches in a college or a university is to introduce students to bodies of knowledge and traditions of inquiry they didn't know much about before, and equip those same students with the analytical skills that will enable them to move confidently within those traditions and to engage in independent research should they choose to do so.

Job performance should be assessed on the basis of academic virtue, not virtue in general. Teachers should show up for their classes, prepare lesson plans, teach what has been advertised, be current in the literature of the field,

All that we know is nothing can be known.
—Lord Byron, 1812

promptly correct assignments and papers, hold regular office hours, and give academic (not political or moral) advice. Researchers should not falsify their credentials, or make things up, or fudge the evidence, or ignore data that tells against their preferred conclusions. Those who publish should acknowledge predecessors and contributors, provide citations to their sources, and strive always to give an accurate account of the materials they present.

That's it, there's nothing else, and nothing more. But this is no small list of professional obligations, and faculty members who are faithful to its imperatives will have little time to look around for causes and agendas to champion.

Some activists on both the left and the right argue that the entire university should be a free-speech zone, one large Hyde Park Corner, for after all, isn't the university primarily a place for the unfettered expression of ideas? The answer is no. The university is primarily a place for teaching and research. The unfettered expression of ideas is a cornerstone of liberal democracy; it is a prime political value. It is not, however, an academic value, and if we come to regard it as our primary responsibility, we will default on the responsibilities assigned us and come to be what no one pays us to be—political agents engaged in political advocacy.

The only advocacy that should go on in the classroom is the advocacy of what James Bernard Murphy has identified as the intellectual

virtues: "thoroughness, perseverance, intellectual honesty," all components of the cardinal academic virtue of being "conscientious in the pursuit of truth." A recent Harris Poll revealed that in the public's eye teachers are among the professionals most likely to tell the truth; and this means, I think, that telling the truth is what the public expects us to be doing. If you're not in the pursuit-of-truth business, you should not be in the university.

From this narrow specification of professional competence follow both obligations and prohibitions. The obligations are the usual peda-

Learn everything; later you will see that nothing is superfluous. —*Hugh of St. Victor, c. 1141*

gogical ones—setting up a course, preparing a syllabus, devising exams, assigning papers or experiments, giving feedback, holding office hours. The prohibitions are that an instructor should do neither less nor more.

Doing less would mean not showing up to class or showing up unprepared, not being alert to the newest approaches and models in the field, and failing to give back papers or to comment on them in helpful ways. Doing more would be to take on tasks that belong properly to other agents—to preachers, political leaders, therapists, and gurus. Agendas imported into the classroom from foreign venues do not enrich the pedagogical task, but overwhelm it and erode its constitutive distinctiveness. Once you start preaching or engaging your students in discussions designed to produce action in the world, you are surely doing something, but it is not academic, even if you give it that name.

The academic enterprise excludes no topic from its purview, but it regards any and every topic as a basis for analysis rather than as a stimulus to some moral, political, or existential commitment. Not to practice politics but to study it; not to proselytize for or against religious doctrines but to describe them; not to affirm or reject affirmative action but to explore its history and lay out the arguments that have been made for and against it.

If every college or university instructor were to hew to this discipline—were to do his or her job and refrain from doing jobs that belong appropriately to others—those who want to do our jobs for us would have no traction or point of polemical entry because politics, religion, or ethics would enter the classroom only as objects of analysis and not as candidates for approval or rejection. The culture wars, at least in the classroom, would be over. There would still be a basis for argument and correction. You could still say, "I don't think your account is quite right for the following reasons." But the reasons would belong to the canons of argument and evidence and not to any political, religious, or ethical agenda.

The name I give to this academic categorical imperative is "academicizing." To academicize an issue is to detach it from those contexts where it poses a choice of what to do or how to live—shall I join the priesthood or join the army?—and insert it into an academic context, where it invites a certain kind of interrogation. What is its history? Why has it been thought significant? What are the prevailing answers to the questions it raises? Where do those answers come from? The more these and related questions are posed, the less students will feel the urgency to bear personal witness in one direction or another.

Some faculty members have forgotten (or never knew) what their job is and spend time trying to form their students' character or turn them into exemplary citizens. I can't speak for every academic, but I am not trained to do these things. Teachers teach materials and confer skills, and therefore don't or shouldn't do a lot of other things—like produce active citizens, inculcate the virtue of tolerance, redress injustices, and bring about political change. Of course, a teacher might produce some of these effects—or their opposites—along the way, but they will be, or should be, contingent and not what is aimed at. The question that administrators often ask, "What practices provide students with the knowledge and commitments to be socially responsible citizens?" is not a bad

question, but the answers to it should not be the content of a college or university course. Once we cross the line that separates academic work from these other kinds, we are guilty both of practicing without a license and of defaulting on our professional responsibilities.

Of course, professors have the right to say what they like *as citizens* (subject to the usual restrictions on libel, treason, and incitements to violence), but in their professional capacities the freedom they might claim is defined and limited by the nature of the task they are performing. My so-called free-speech rights will be very different depending, for example, on whether I am a fan at a baseball game or a nurse in an operating room. In the first context, my free-speech rights are pretty broad; I can yell any number of things, even abusive, profane things, without being silenced, or arrested, or thrown out of the stadium. In the context of the operating room, however, my free-speech rights barely exist at all; if I decide, in the middle of a procedure, to advocate for a higher salary or better working conditions for nurses, I will have no First Amendment defense when I am hauled out of the room and later fired. The reason that I would have been fired is not because of the content of what I said, but because my words, whatever their content, were uttered in a setting that rendered them inappropriate and even dangerous.

Academic situations fall somewhere in between the baseball stadium and the medical-operating theater. In the context of the academy, where free speech is generally highly valued, you will have more or less free-speech rights depending on what you're doing and where you're doing it. If I am a student, and I begin to say something, and the teacher cuts me off and says that my point is beside the point he or she wishes to pursue, I have no free-speech recourse. On the other side, as an instructor I can conduct my class in any manner I like—lecture, discussion, group presentations—and I can assign whatever readings I judge to be relevant to the course's topic. Those are pedagogical choices, and I cannot be penalized for making them.

But if I harass students, or call them names, or make fun of their ethnicity, or if I use class time to rehearse my personal political views or attempt to win students over to them, I might well find myself in a disciplinary hearing, either because I am abusing my pedagogical authority or because I am turning the scene of instruction into a scene of indoctrination. What you are free to say in some venues you are not free to say in all venues, and your lack of freedom is not a First Amendment matter; it is a matter, rather, of the appropriateness of certain kinds of speech relative to certain contexts of employment or social interaction.

Men learn what they teach.

—*Seneca, c. 64* BC

Of course, there's no shortage of people who will politicize the academy and use it as they see fit. The corporate world looks to the university for its workforce. Parents want the university to pick up the baton they may have dropped. Students demand that the university support the political cause of the moment. Conservatives believe that the university should refurbish and preserve the traditions of the past. Liberals and progressives would like to see those same traditions dismantled and replaced by what they take to be better ones. Alumni wonder why the athletics teams aren't winning more. Politicians and trustees wonder why the professors aren't teaching more. Whether it is state legislators who want a say in hiring and course content, or donors who want to tell colleges how to spend the funds they provide, or parents who are disturbed when Dick and Jane bring home books about cross-dressing and gender change, or corporations that want new departments opened and others closed, or activist faculty who urge the administration to declare a position on the war in Iraq, there is no end of interests intent on deflecting the university from its search for truth and setting it on another path.

Each of these lobbies has its point, but it is not the university's point, which is to produce and disseminate (through teaching and publication) academic knowledge and to train those

who will take up that task in the future. But can the university defend the autonomy it claims (or should claim) from public pressures? Is that claim even coherent? The philosopher Mark C. Taylor would say no. In a key sentence in the final chapter of his book *The Moment of Complexity*, Taylor declares that "the university is not autonomous but is a thoroughly parasitic institution, which continuously depends on the generosity of the host so many academics claim to reject." He continues, "The critical activities of the humanities, arts, and sciences are only possible if they are supported by the very economic interests their criticism so often calls into question."

As a description of the university's inevitable involvement with, and dependence on, the forces and investments of the larger society, this seems to me exactly right. But the prescriptive conclusion that Taylor draws from this description seems to me to be exactly wrong: let's stop pretending, he says, that we can operate in a splendid (but fictional) isolation from everything that enables us; let's accept the fact that we are in, and of, the market, and "find new ways to turn market forces to our [own] advantage"; let's go beyond the kind of critical analysis that does little more than "promote organizations and institutions whose obsolescence is undeniable."

But if we are worried about obsolescence and the loss of relevance, the surest way to court both is to become so attuned to the interests and investments of other enterprises—the market, global politics, the information revolution—that we are finally indistinguishable from them. If there is nothing that sets us apart, if there is nothing distinctive about our task or the criteria for accomplishing it, if there is nothing that marks our work as ours and not everyone's, there will be no *particular* reason to support us by giving us a room (or a franchise) of our own.

The professional obligation, as I define it, is moral because it holds faculty members to the *particular* morality of the institution, the morality that comes along with its immanent rationality, which is the rationality of truth seeking, to which one cannot be faithful if one does not "condemn cheating, academic fraud, and plagiarism"—all actions "antithetical to the search for truth."

To be sure, that is not the whole of morality—there are legions of moral issues left unaddressed—but it is, or should be, the whole of academic morality. The fact that moral concerns turn up in the texts students study doesn't mean that what the students are learning about is morality. They are learning about the ways in which poets, philosophers, and political theorists structure their inquiries and reflections. Those inquiries and reflections will often begin and end with moral questions, but what makes those authors worth studying is not the answers they happen to give to those questions—you can find Plato and William James compelling without either affirming or rejecting the morality they seem to be urging—but the verbal, architectonic, or argumentative skills they display in the course of implementing the intention to write a poem, a piece of philosophy, or a meditation on the nature of government.

The "genuine inquiry" in which students are (or should be) engaged is not an inquiry about what kind of person they should be but an inquiry about what kind of person Plato or Thomas Hobbes or John Rawls or John Milton thought they should be, and for what reasons, and with what poetic or philosophical force. The exam question is not, "If you were to find yourself in such and such a situation, what should you do?" The exam question is, "If you were to find yourself in such and such a situation, what would Plato, Hobbes, Rawls, and Kant tell you to do, and what are the different assumptions and investments that would generate their different recommendations?"

You can answer that question in a good academic fashion—answer it, that is, as an academic question—without coming down on the side of any morality whatsoever, and no instructor should penalize you because you stick to the business at hand and decline the invitation—often proffered but always to be declined—to make the educational experience everything in general and nothing in particular.

The School of Athens (detail), by Raphael, c. 1509–1510.

SCHOOL TERMS

by George Steiner

In the West, the notion of "literacy" is inseparable from the growth of monasticism and church schools after the decay of the Roman Empire. To be "literate" signified the ability to read Scripture, to form letters on the page. This capacity, often rudimentary, defined the cleric and the clerk, these two designations being closely related. Some familiarity with Latin, though often in hybrid and transitional forms and, only very rarely, some access to classical Greek, via Byzantium or Islam, attached to ecclesiastical, legal, bureaucratic, and diplomatic dignities. Literacy thus defined a "clerisy" and those ideological and political power relations which made possible the governance of church and state. It is from this legacy, set out incomparably in Dante's tracts on the vulgate and on literary education, that modern Western concepts of literacy and of its usages—where "modern" simply means postmedieval—derive.

This inheritance carried with it a blurring of the term "literacy." It took on at least two principal significations. At its more elevated level, literacy came to stand for the shared *communitas,*

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for the shared code of reference of the learned. It pointed to their ownership of the material means of reading and writing. It came to underwrite—itself a suggestive term—the great age of the private library from Desiderius Erasmus and Michel de Montaigne to the mid-twentieth century. It comprised the producers and consumers of literature—note the source and content of that word—the lawmakers and divines, the scientists both natural and philosophical, the

I am an old scholar, better-looking now than when I was young. That's what sitting on your ass does to your face. —*Leonard Cohen, 1970*

political thinkers and historians, the metaphysicians and the poets. St. Jerome at his desk is iconic of that commonwealth of grammar. Belles-lettres, "bookmen," and "readers" in the academic hierarchy (this rubric persists in British higher education to this day), correspondents in public and private affairs across the European *civilitas,* and women and men who could "write letters" are categories which illustrate the breadth and centrality of the word "literacy." Very gradually, by reluctant osmosis, high culture and communicative techniques seeped downward. It influenced, in some measure, the rudimentary, often minimal capacities to read and write at all. Libraries became public; schooling expanded. In the wake of the Enlightenment, of the French and Industrial Revolutions, of Victorian didactic and social meliorism—consider the key functions of literacy in John Stuart Mill, in Matthew Arnold—and early models of the welfare state, literacy spread to the population at large. The role of printing and of printed matter, such as the cheap press, is both essential and conspicuous. But let us be careful. Even in this second, wider sense, literacy often was and indeed remains marginal. For generations, instruction remained elementary. The vast majority of the agricultural and laboring classes, women in domestic or menial employment, and early school leavers were literate in only the most superficial and restricted sense. At best, they could make out basic texts. Their writing skills were virtually inert. What books could they read, let alone own?

In tandem with the uneven deployment of literacy came the prodigious development of the sciences: theoretical and applied, pure and technological. But the definitive breakthrough can be ascribed to Galileo's postulate that the language of nature, of reality in motion, when grasped and ordered by human reason, is that of mathematics.

Observing the imperialism of the mathematical in the sciences, in technology, in philosophic logic, and in the mechanization of our daily lives, one has the impression of an internalized dynamics and a drive for acquisition like no other. As Galileo and René Descartes professed, a body of knowledge—a gathering of data and insight—only ripens to being a science and a coherent discipline when it can to a greater or lesser degree be mathematicized.

One consequence has been the "two cultures" debate. It seems to me that in all the ill-tempered polemics which C. P. Snow initiated, an absolutely crucial point has been overlooked. The fundamental difference between the humanities and the sciences is the arrow of time. Virtually by definition, the sciences and technology move forward. Tomorrow is richer, more encompassing than today. New knowledge, new theoretical possibilities will be available next Monday. In the greater part of his enterprise the Western humanist looks ever backward. He studies; he teaches; he comments on the philosophies, the literatures, the music, the fine arts, and the history of the past. He celebrates the Bach anniversaries or the Mozart year. The humanities strive to quicken into renewed life the remembrance of things past. Logically, there is absolutely no reason why a new Shakespeare or Michelangelo or Ludwig van Beethoven should not appear on the scene tomorrow morning; why the next Johann Wolfgang von Goethe should not be drafting his unprecedented *Faust* in the high-rise apartment building next door. But how many of us, whatever our passions for modern, experimental art, truly believe in such epiphany? Resist, if you can, the seductions of facile pathos, of sunset in the

vein of Oswald Spengler; dismiss Paul Valéry's warning as to the mortality of our civilization; involve yourself receptively with conceptual art, with electronic and aleatory music, with postmodern writing. Still, the intuition gnaws: the humanities and arts in the West are virtuosities of twilight and recollection.

The reasons for this elude confident diagnosis. The phenomenon itself could be an optical illusion. Renaissance theorists told of incipient decline. But if there is sunset, it may point toward the eventuality that "tiredness" is a psychic and collective truth as well as a physiological fact. An enormity of past history weighs on Europe and on all that is archival in the American Eden. Bent over a blank page, John Keats puzzles how he can inscribe the word "tragedy" when Sophocles and Shakespeare are looking over his shoulder. Note the cunning of recuperation in so many of our twentieth-century masters. James Joyce enlists Homer; Pablo Picasso overtly anthologizes the unfolding of Western art from the cave paintings to Diego Velázquez and Édouard Manet; Igor Stravinsky plays metamorphic changes on Renaissance, baroque, and eighteenth-century templates. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos* are terminal, almost frantic rushes to catalogue the past before the museum shuts down.

The hope of preserving or resuscitating humanistic literacy in any traditional mode seems to me illusory. Literacy—dominion of the classical—belonged to an elite. The democratization of schooling and political society runs counter to the Platonic ideals aimed for in the class divisions and power relations in education throughout the Ancien Régime or Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Receptivity to higher culture is far from natural or universal. It can be nurtured and multiplied, but only to a limited extent. The study of Greek irregular verbs or Horace's metrics will always have engaged the few. In a more general, though not altogether evident sense, the ability to take in complex arguments—to respond to a Platonic dialogue, a tractate by Baruch Spinoza, a treatise by Kant, or a Shakespearean sonnet—characterizes a minority. This is true as well of the arts and of classical and modern music. A fog of political hypocrisy and pedagogic cant shrouds this entire issue. "Political correctness," penitential submission to the rights of populism, make it virtually illicit to confront the deep-lying barriers which may separate the majority of men and women from access to the high places, to William Butler Yeats' "monuments of unageing intellect."

The inability of high culture to defend its corner effectively, what has been called "the treason of the clerics," stems from a grim if often repressed insight. Twentieth-century barbarism

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, c. 1797.

burst from within the heartland of European civilization. It flourished in the very locale of aesthetic and philosophic merit. The death camps were built neither in the Gobi Desert nor in Equatorial Africa. And when barbarism challenged, the humanities, the arts, and much of philosophic inquiry proved impotent. What is worse, culture collaborated decoratively with despotism and massacre. There was many a lover of fine arts and classical music among the butchers, many a teacher of great literature among the sycophants. The mere designation "literae humaniores" now rings hollow.

Learning is ever young, even in old age.
—Aeschylus, c. 490 BC

"What, then, shall we do?" as Lenin famously asked.

Certain remedies lie to hand. Even the most efficient and devoted of schoolteachers are being systematically humiliated and prevented from doing their proper job by mountains of legalistic paperwork and coercive red tape. They are poorly remunerated and condescended to. The consequence has been an automatism of self-destruction. It is too often the least academically inspired who drift into secondary teaching, thus transmitting their own saddened mediocrity to generations of bored pupils. It is a truism, long admitted, that neither the British A-levels nor the American high school curriculum—set in a matrix in which the basketball coach earns more than the math teacher—equips one for the modern world. Yet time after time, authentic reform—such as the adoption in the United Kingdom of an international *baccalauréat* to remedy the absurd contraction of vital skills, and to allow a grounding in both the humanities and the sciences—has been discouraged by special interests and an establishment frightened by innovation. Who can number the attempts to enforce in American schooling an attainment of genuine writing skills or some competence in foreign languages and numeracy? Such aims are wholly in reach of good sense and political will (Stalinism organized formidable levels of literacy, arithmetic capacities, and language learning by elevating teachers' salaries and social status). None of this requires witchcraft.

If standards are to be reaffirmed, populist claims will have to yield to an order of merit in which genuine excellence can be distinguished from the mushroom growth of parasitic forms. All that is lacking is the political nerve which will expose and defy that disdain for intellectual life—that distrust of eminence characteristic of mass consumption in late capitalism. (One recalls the brief but intoxicating summons to education and intellectual adventure which lit the United States in the wake of the Soviet launching of *Sputnik*.) Again: we must acknowledge that human talents and the means for concentrated mental effort are unevenly distributed. Not every man and woman can ingest (Ben Jonson's telling idiom) Immanuel Kant on synthetic a priori or a nonlinear equation. "Elite" means something very simple: it signifies that some things are finer than others, that no one is admitted to a physics department without mathematical competence, that Bob Dylan, entrancing as are his gifts, does not equal Keats. The Last Judgment will, I suspect, be a *concours* run by French examiners.

But as urgent and far-reaching as these issues are, they do not go to the heart of the matter, which is that of a fundamental literacy, a conceptual core for the women and men of today and tomorrow ("core curriculum" is a useful shorthand). By "literacy" I mean the ability to engage with, to respond to, what is most challenging and creative in our societies. To experience and contribute to the energies of informed debate. To distinguish the "news that stays news," as Ezra Pound put it, from the tidal waves of ephemeral rubbish, superstition, irrationalism, and commercial exploitation. Can we draft such a central syllabus for both intellect and feeling? Can we sketch a "base" correspondent to the latent strengths of the imagination, a central axis of roused awareness interactive with the demands and fascination of the world?

The provisional suggestions I now put forward will seem utopian, perhaps scandalously

so. But there are times of crisis in which only the utopian is realistic.

The eclipse of numeracy throughout our culture, the ignorance among those who regard themselves as educated in mathematical concepts and procedures, are at once a cliché and a misery. There is scarcely any constituent in the ways in which our world operates in which mathematical operations do not play a major role. It is not only nature which speaks mathematics; it is modern life. Yet the relevant elements are to a vast majority of us a rebarbative mystery or a dim recollection of school classes wretchedly taught and happily forgotten. Go around the room asking family or friends to define a "mean average."

The loss extends far beyond the pragmatic. The rapacious, territorial, often sadistic mammal that is man has generated a handful of activities: constructs of consciousness which are nonutilitarian and of transcendent beauty. These "motions of spirit" (in Dante's words) include music, poetry, metaphysics. Their origin remains a consoling enigma. Above all, they comprise pure mathematics. The debate as to whether mathematical abstractions have their validating counterpart in external reality as Plato held, or whether they are autonomous mental "play"—axiomatic games of mesmerizing depth and purity developed, as it were, from within—remains unresolved. This debate touches on what is most mysterious in the resources and dreams of the human psyche. What is not in doubt is the sheer beauty, the unfolding elegance, even, at certain points, the wit of the mathematical enterprise. To have encountered Euclid, as Edna St. Vincent Millay expressed it, is to have "looked on Beauty bare." It is indeed in mathematics that Keats' somewhat rhetorical equivalence between truth and beauty has its fulfillment. This "beauty," however, has an exact, substantive meaning all but inaccessible to the nonnumerate, to all those who cannot take in what Leibniz intended when he opined that when "He sings to himself, God sings algebra."

The prevalent view is that beyond rudimentary rote, mathematics can be imparted only to the specially gifted. The grim fact is that so much of the teaching is in the hands of the defeated, of those whose own attainments were wanting. Thus the feedback is negative and the spiral downward. Undoubtedly, there are innate, perhaps resistant differences between aptitudes to numeracy. But these have been grossly exaggerated. Hence my conviction that even advanced mathematical concepts can be made imaginatively compelling and demonstrable when they are presented *historically*. What must be set out is the intellectual and social history which lies behind them and which led to solutions or nonsolutions—the latter being perhaps

> *The desire of knowledge, like the thirst of riches, increases ever with the acquisition of it.*
>
> —*Laurence Sterne, 1760*

the most fascinating and instructive category. It is via these great voyages and adventures of the human mind, so often charged with personal rivalries, passions, and frustrations—the argosy founders or gets trapped in the ice of the insoluble—that we nonmathematicians can look into a sovereign and decisive realm. Let me cite an example.

Prime numbers are the building blocks of our universe ("Only God," said one great mathematician, "could have invented prime numbers"). Any alert child can begin to manipulate their magic. Developed in the 1860s by Bernhard Riemann and others, the Riemann hypothesis concerns the distribution of primes—we know their number to be infinite—and their relation to zero. The hypothesis is that this distribution can be mapped along a "ley line," allowing one to predict where the next prime number will turn up. A pride of mathematicians, many of towering stature, set out to prove Riemann's intuitively persuasive supposition. Their labors animated not only concentrated genius but personal rivalries of the fiercest kind. Again and again, proof has seemed tantalizingly close. Again and again, a flaw has been detected in the chain of demonstration. Proponents have sometimes suffered mental collapse and even suicide.

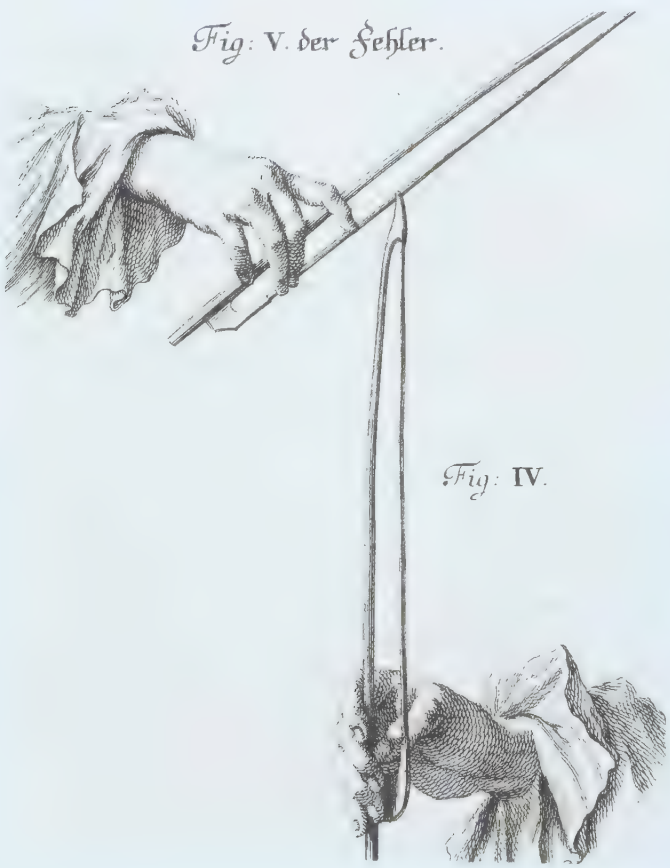
As a recent historian of this enthralling saga puts it (he is himself an eminent pure mathematician), "Despite the best efforts of the greatest mathematical minds to explain the modulation and transformation of this mystical music, the primes remain an unanswered riddle. We still await the person whose name will live forever as the mathematician who made the primes sing."

Locate this quest within its intellectual, historical, social, and even ideological fabric; rouse the child and the student to the inexhaustible fun and provocation of the unsolved; and you will have flung open doors on "seas of thought" deeper and more richly stocked than any on the globe.

The persistent interleaving of mathematical and musical terms and concepts—the assertion that "primes have music in them" —is no accident. From Pythagoras onward, it has been understood that the relations between music and number theory are organic. The immensely influential conceit of the "music of the spheres" buttressed Kepler's conviction that the elliptical functions which govern planetary motions are of a musical order, that the rubric *harmonia mundi* has a perfectly empirical and demonstrable sense. Pythagoras, Kepler, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz would have rejoiced in the designation as "background noise" of those radio waves which are now regarded as the vestiges and validation of the Big Bang which triggered our universe into being. Examine a Johannes Sebastian Bach canon or a Pierre Boulez score and their close affinities with algebraic codes and patterns become visible.

Numerous ethnic communities and traditions do not manifest what could justly be entitled "literature." No society on earth, however "primitive," however underprivileged economically or ecologically, exists without music. Musical notation, whether formally written down or not, is like that of arithmetic, a universal language far beyond the aspirations of any conceivable Esperanto. A hit tune will resound simultaneously in the backyards of Patagonia and the bars of Vladivostok. Electronic transmission through downloading and digital discs have boundlessly multiplied this planetary ubiquity. The languages of music need no translators (nor do those of calculus). Yet as obvious as is the role of music in individual and collective existence—how many of us would want to live without it?—so many riddles remain. To define music as organized sound is to beg the question. Can the often harmonious, syncopated sounds emitted by birds or by whales be defined as music in the proper sense? Is music singular to the human species? Intuition suggests that musical forms, even complex ones, preceded the evolution of speech. If so, how did they originate? Marxism adduces collective, choral emissions during shared labor. Claude Lévi-Strauss is more cautious:

Page from a violin tutorial by Leopold Mozart, illustrating the correct (Fig. IV) and incorrect (Fig.V) ways to hold a bow, 1756.



the invention of melody "is the supreme mystery in the sciences of man." Each and every one of us—is there genuine tone-deafness?—will have experienced the power of music to seize upon our emotions, to quicken sorrow or joy, ferocity or tenderness, dynamic anticipation or nostalgia. How does music work inside us, what are its contiguities with our nervous system, with our innards? Why are we indifferent to tunes others find unforgettable? How can it be that identical compositions, such as Beethoven's setting of Friedrich Schiller's "Ode to Joy," can serve as anthems for totally opposed political and ideological movements? First and foremost, there is the semantic crux. Music and compositions are charged with meaning. But when we seek to articulate this meaning, to paraphrase it verbally, the result is either vaguely metaphoric or of a desperate banality. Only program music is translatable. Music is meaningful in the extreme. For many of us it comes closer than any other human happening to communicating the possible proximity of the transcendent. But strictly considered, *it has no sense*. In essence, its overwhelming force is useless. It is this potent nonutility which exasperated and worried Plato; it is this anarchic "unemployment" which made him restrict music to athletic and military functions in the ideal polis.

Learning to sing or play an instrument within the bounds of one's natural endowments—the most brilliant living percussionist is deaf—is a formidable enhancement of both psychic and social resources. Music can be the therapy of the hurt spirit also, as has long been suspected, in a medical perspective. To understand music is to be confronted with the surprisingly confining limits of language. Only dance, perhaps, can explicate music. Asked to explain a difficult étude, Robert Schumann simply played it a second, then a third time. Now it is precisely this utter presence beyond verbal paraphrase or proof, beyond logical diagnosis, which seems to attach to the "borderline" but immensely significant phenomena of religious belief, of eros and of death. Pace Ludwig Wittgenstein, the limits of language are not those of my world. Friedrich Nietzsche saw much deeper when he defined music as the *mysterium tremendum* of the unfathomably obvious.

Architecture has been called "frozen music." It has also been described as "geometry in motion." The kinship between music and architecture is celebrated in classical mythology and practice. Music attends the founding of cities. Flutes resound as the Athenians erect the walls of the Piraeus; Thebes arises to the tune of Arion's lyre. As Valéry has it in his Platonic dialogue on architecture, the purpose of the architect is to "redistribute [light], endowed with intelligible forms and almost musical properties, into the space where mortals move." To those who have been taught to listen, "a facade can sing." In both architecture and music, essential aspects of harmony, proportions, and thematic variation are related. In turn, these aspects are fundamentally geometric and algebraic. Numerical harmonics generate their beauty and their truth. The animate temple, observes Valéry, "is the mathematical image of a girl of Corinth." In a manner far surpassing simile, divine creation is, in creation myths across the planet and in Plato's *Timaeus*, the deed of a supreme architect, of a master builder. (Cross reference: Henrik Ibsen's ironic reprise of this motif.) The compass and the plumb line are the symbols of the cosmic blueprint.

> *Learning hath gained most by those books by which the printers have lost.*
>
> —*Thomas Fuller, 1642*

Today we are in one of the stellar periods of architecture in all history. Public and private buildings, bridges of stunning beauty and innovation, are being built all over the globe. The relevant theoretical considerations and techniques extend from geology, material sciences, engineering, and design to higher mathematics. They engage economics and social planning, transport, urbanization, and ecology in its most urgent and embracing horizons. To be initiated into the functions of architecture in contemporary life is to encounter cardinal dilemmas in the state of our cities, our mobility, and what ideals we may still harbor as to social justice and healthcare. Having witnessed so

much violent destruction, having seen the tragic fragility of our proudest towers, we are now in a fever of construction which, despite etymology, is often anything but edification. It is, furthermore, in today's architecture that we engage with the computer at its most creative. There is architecture before the computer and after. The borderline and transition can be exemplified by the differences between the as yet experimental, tactile mathematics of the Sydney Opera House and

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action. —*Herbert Spencer*

the computer-generated, computer-controlled marvels of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the Jewish Museum in Berlin. In both these cases, design and realization would not have been feasible without high-power holographic modeling and exact computation. "Give the gold medal to the computer," quipped Frank Gehry when describing his Bilbao project. In correlation, electronic music is emitted to "argue," to activate the conceptual spaces in the access to the Tate Modern in London. To be taught to "read" a building is to be made literate in respect of much that is most beautiful and expressive in modernity.

The fourth synapse in our core literacy, in the new quadrivium, would be an introduction to molecular biology and genetics. The veritable explosion of these disciplines since the mapping of DNA and its double helix is altering the texture of private and public affairs. Cloning, the creation of self-replicating molecules in vitro, the genome projects, the potential transplant of vital organs—including memory—are and will be of such consequence as to generate mutations in the human condition. What facet of ethics, law, demography, or social policy will be immune to these reorganizations of bodily life and consciousness? Every question as to personal responsibility, identity, the life span, the right to program heredity, the limits of state intervention in the determination of gender (for military ends), and the arrest of genetic malformations is being reformulated. In the most sober perspective, the horizons of being are made to seem unbounded yet also full of menace. Responsible awareness will need access, albeit at an introductory level, to the concepts of the new alchemy. Otherwise women and men will be excluded from indispensable political, social, and personal debates. Already, the controversies raging over therapeutic abortion, euthanasia, cloning, and "eugenic" manipulations demand from the layman, so intensely implicated, a considerable sophistication. To echo the old maxim: the life sciences are far too serious to be left to the scientists. The caring layman will have to do some homework if his or her voice is to be heard. Already, fundamentalist censorship and the political appeal to raucous ignorance demonstrate the urgency of the problem and the imperative need for some measure of biological-genetic literacy.

A central curriculum in mathematics, music, architecture, and the life sciences—taught, wherever possible, historically. These four axes open sensibility to both the most immediate challenges and the outermost reaches of thought. Strikingly, they also embody an incommensurable potential for fun, play, and aesthetic delight. *Homo ludens* is enlisted to the turbulent heart of his being. To discern wit in mathematics, humor in music (Franz Joseph Haydn, Erik Satie), playfulness in architecture—that gherkin over London—or the sheer loveliness of certain molecular structures, is to participate in a pedagogy for hope. No man or woman should feel themselves to be literate in this new millennium without some grasp of a nonlinear equation; without some intimation of how music speaks its world language; without some recognition of the issues at stake—aesthetic and practical, formal, and political—when a new building mushrooms on the horizon; and without some feel for the biogenetic reshaping of our identity (Aristotle's or Descartes' *ego* is no longer ours). How else can we be at home, or even an informed guest in what Martin Heidegger has called "the house of being"?

Literacy as numerate, musical, architectural, and biogenetic. A mad project. I only wish it were more so.

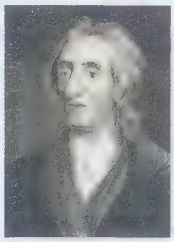
CONVERSATIONS

ARISTOTLE

Nicomachean Ethics, c. 350 BC

If we take the various natural powers which belong to us, we first acquire the proper faculties and afterward display the activities. It is clearly so with the senses. It was not by seeing frequently or hearing frequently that we acquired the senses of seeing or hearing; on the contrary, it was because we possessed the senses that we made use of them, not by making use of them that we obtained them. But the virtues we acquire by first exercising them, as is the case with all the arts, for it is by doing what we ought to do when we have learnt the arts that we learn the arts themselves; we become builders by building and harpists by playing the harp. Similarly it is by doing just acts that we become just, by doing temperate acts that we become temperate, by doing courageous acts that we become courageous. The experience of states is a witness to this truth, for it is by training the habits that legislators make the citizens good. This is the object which all legislators have at heart; if a legislator does not succeed in it, he fails of his purpose, and it constitutes the distinction between a good polity and a bad one.

JOHN LOCKE



Of the Conduct of the Understanding, 1706

We are born with faculties and powers capable almost of anything, such at least as would carry us further than can easily be imagined; but it is only the exercise of those powers which give us ability and skill in anything that leads us toward perfection. The legs of a dancing master and the fingers of a musician fall as it were naturally, without thought or pains, into regular and admirable motions. Bid them change their parts, and they will in vain endeavor to produce like motions in the members not used to them, and it will require length of time and long practice to attain but some degrees of like ability. What incredible and astonishing actions do we find rope dancers and tumblers bring their bodies to! All these admired motions beyond the reach and almost conception of unpracticed spectators are nothing but the mere effects of use and industry in men whose bodies have nothing peculiar in them from those of the amazed lookers-on. As it is in the body, so it is in the mind: practice makes it what it is, and most even of those excellencies which are looked on as natural endowments will be found, when examined into more narrowly, to be the product of exercise, and to be raised to that pitch only by repeated actions.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Autobiography, c. 1733

The precept of *Order* requiring that *every part of my business should have its allotted time*, one page in my little book contain'd the following scheme of employment for the twenty-four hours of a natural day.

THE MORNING. *Question.* What good shall I do this day?	5	
	6	Rise, wash, and address *Powerful Goodness!* Contrive day's business, and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study, and breakfast.
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	Work.
	11	
NOON.	12	
	1	Read, or overlook my accounts, and dine.
	2	
	3	
	4	Work.
	5	
EVENING. *Question.* What good have I done today?	6	
	7	
	8	Put things in their places. Supper. Music or diversion, or conversation. Examination of the day.
	9	
	10	
	11	
	12	
NIGHT.	1	Sleep.
	2	
	3	
	4	

I enter'd upon the execution of this plan for self-examination, and continu'd it with occasional intermissions for some time.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

The Great Gatsby, 1922

"Look here, this is a book Mr. Gatz had when he was a boy. It just shows you."

He opened it at the back cover and turned it around for me to see. On the last flyleaf was printed the word SCHEDULE and the date SEPTEMBER 12, 1906. And underneath:

Rise from bed	6:00 A.M.
Dumbbell exercise and wall scaling	6:15–6:30
Study electricity, etc.	7:15–8:15
Work	8:30–4:30 P.M.
Baseball and sports	4:30–5:00
Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it	5:00–6:00
Study needed inventions	7:00–9:00

GENERAL RESOLVES

No wasting time at Shafters or [a name, indecipherable]

No more smoking or chewing

Bath every other day

Read one improving book or magazine per week

Save $5.00 [crossed out] $3.00 per week

Be better to parents

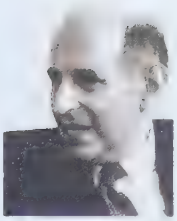
"I come across this book by accident," said the old man. "It just shows you, don't it?"

"It just shows you."

PLATO

Republic, c. 378 BC

I don't know all the musical modes. Just leave me the mode that would suitably imitate the tone and rhythm of a courageous person who is active in battle or doing other violent deeds; or who is failing and facing wounds, death, or some other misfortune; and who, in all these circumstances, is fighting off his fate steadily and with self-control. Leave me also another mode, that of someone engaged in a peaceful, unforced, voluntary action, persuading someone or asking a favor of a god in prayer or of a human being through teaching and exhortation; or, on the other hand, of someone submitting to the supplications of another who is teaching him and trying to get him to change his mind and who, in all these circumstances, is acting with moderation and self-control—not with arrogance but with understanding—and is content with the outcome. Leave me, then, these two modes, which will best imitate the violent or voluntary tones of voice of those who are moderate and courageous, whether in good fortune or in bad.



ALLAN BLOOM

The Closing of the American Mind, 1987

Students today know exactly why Plato takes music so seriously. They know it affects life very profoundly and are indignant because Plato seems to want to rob them of their most intimate pleasure. They are drawn into argument with Plato about the experience of music, and the dispute centers on how to evaluate it and deal with it. This encounter not only helps to illuminate the phenomenon of contemporary music, but also provides a model of how contemporary students can profitably engage with a classic text. The very fact of their fury shows how much Plato threatens what is dear and intimate to them. They are little able to defend their experience, which had seemed unquestionable until questioned, and it is most resistant to cool analysis. Yet if a student can—and this is most difficult and unusual—draw back, get a critical distance on what he clings to, come to doubt the ultimate value of what he loves, he has taken the first and most difficult step toward the philosophic conversion. Indignation is the soul's defense against the wound of doubt about its own. Recognizing indignation for what it is constitutes knowledge of the soul, and is thus an experience more philosophic than the study of mathematics.

A French primary school teacher lectures about birds, 1903.

ESCAPE FROM THE IVORY TOWER

by April Bernard

It was not as if I hadn't been warned. Often, in that terrible year I floundered in graduate school, I remembered the two cautions I had received, from two people I revered but whom I had chosen to ignore.

The first warning had come from Robert Fitzgerald—the poet and translator who for some years taught undergraduates at Harvard. I studied "versification" with him and also spent a term in a writing seminar in which six students met with him for three hours a week as he took us through complicated problems in literature—comparing translations of Flaubert or Dante; analyzing how exactly a story by William Maxwell or a poem by Richard Wilbur "ticked like a clock" but also "broke the heart"; and, once in a rare while, when something one of us had written seemed to him to "succeed," treating an undergraduate story or poem to the same serious analysis of its virtues.

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Discussion of our much more frequent failures, accompanied by Fitzgerald's infinitely kind advice, solace, and reading suggestions, took place in our private weekly tutorials. Once, in that autumn of 1977, I arrived at his office to find him standing and holding out the gift of a small brown object: a copy of Elizabeth Bishop's new *Geography III*. (She was a colleague of his at Harvard, and had also been a teacher of mine.) He had his own copy, and we spent the hour reading the poems to one another—his fine, dry voice almost singing the lines, occasionally stopping himself with his characteristic muttered exclamation of "umph" at a particular passage, like this: "'... and evening commences.' Umph!" followed by a sharp look to make sure I had registered the felicity.

Sometimes our meetings took place during lunch in a restaurant called Iruna, and it was over my first garlicky snails that I asked if he thought I should go to graduate school, specifically to an MFA program.

"No, no. You are too restless, and you would be bored. You need to get a job in New York, work, travel. If you are meant to write, you will write."

At first, I did what he said. I found myself at *The New York Review of Books*, working as a kind of serf—making coffee, proofreading, making coffee, getting yelled at for my frequent mistakes, occasionally making the bosses laugh, making coffee—all the time afflicted by a kind of cultural vertigo at the heights to which I had climbed. For in those days, it was understood by everyone in the dumpy offices of *The New York Review* that we were at the pinnacle.

After a year or so, I told my wonderful, difficult boss, Barbara Epstein, that I would be applying to graduate schools for a Ph.D. program in literature.

"What on earth *for*?"

This was not the reaction I expected. After all, many of the *Review*'s cherished writers were distinguished academics.

"That's an *accident*, toots. Anyway, no one needs a Ph.D. in *English*. Just *read*."

I disregarded this—in retrospect, excellent —advice, even though it persisted through my application process, bolstered by Barbara's citations of people she knew who had found graduate school "unspeakably *dreary*," people we both knew who were "the most *tired, pompous*" academics, some of them "real stinkeroonies." While I didn't disagree, I couldn't explain that I had decided I would never make it in the

> *Plasticine and self-expression will not solve the problems of education. Nor will technology and vocational guidance; nor the classics and the Hundred Best Books.*
>
> *—Aldous Huxley, 1945*

magazine business. Other assistants in the office, and friends elsewhere, had wangled actual editing work, had written for other publications, were maybe even being groomed to write a piece for the *Review*, while I kept brewing the coffee, reading the slush pile of poems, running errands, and cracking jokes. Vaguely, I imagined an academic career that involved long lazy days in a cafe writing poems.

Barbara was very kind to me—I took all sorts of hours away from the office, enrolled in a crash Latin course at CUNY—and she got teary when I left.

"I will miss you," she said. "But I'm mostly crying *for* you. You're like Jane Eyre going to *Lowood*. You'll *die* in that *miasma*!"

She told me to call if I hated it.

I did hate it. And I was much too proud to call.

I began my year at Yale as a Ph.D. student in English in the fall of 1980. The boredom that Robert Fitzgerald had predicted for me set in within hours of my arrival, but it was a boredom unlike any I had experienced hitherto—it was an anxious boredom; a constant looking about me and thinking, "You must be joking," sort of boredom; the boredom of confronting the Byzantine rules of a culture I was hard pressed to believe actually existed. All the rules that mattered were unwritten, as is

always the case in elaborate hierarchies. Here are some of them:

1. Most teachers of graduate seminars (unlike, say, the very same teachers in an undergraduate setting) will be tepidly enraged by their students. One going theory among my fellow students for this was that they were "jealous" of us, but I saw no evidence for that. Our professors saw us as a chore—and in fact, we were probably not nearly as malleable, bright, or complimentary as most of their undergraduates.

Learning without wisdom is a load of books on an ass's back. —*Japanese proverb*

2. We were reminded by the administration and by our professors that there were "too many" of us (twelve, I think, in my year) and that some of us would "have to go" by the end of the first year, as there were only "jobs out there" for "four" of us. I still remember that chilling math, and I also remember snorting aloud with laughter the first time it was said to my group; it was melodramatic, silly, like the driver's-ed class where the instructor asks for "volunteers for death."

3. The men will speak in class 90 percent of the time. (Or was it only 89 percent?) About half of us were women, but effectively only the men spoke. Of course this was the Dark Ages of 1980, before women had learned how to talk, or something. But since I had come from a university and a workplace and friendships where women talked all the time, these graduate classrooms looked like something out of a corny biopic—Marie Curie, head bowed as she washes test tubes for the men scientists in a lab at the Sorbonne, or Virginia Woolf denied entry to the library at Oxford. I tried to speak; I was baffled by sharp correction and by indifference.

4. The author will have no place in our consideration except as a stumbling block. This was the broad rule; then the subsets went into two different directions. The old-fashioned teachers, for whom the tenets of what in the 1930s had been named New Criticism still held sway, engaged the class in discussion of the text, and subtext—but never with reference to the author's intention or life—in a way that was familiar to me from college but, since we were in graduate school, seemed infinitely less playful. The wave of the new—and this was an assortment of structuralist, poststructuralist, deconstructionist, and various "cultural studies" styles of reading—proclaimed that the author is a fool; he does not know what he did. The author is a fraud; he tries to make us think he is doing X, but actually, and evilly, he is doing Y. The author is racist; moreover he is anti-Semitic, imperialist, capitalist, misogynist (for these purposes, we pretend to be feminists).

5. To learn Anglo-Saxon, you will submit yourself to the tutelage of a sneering martinet who will moreover inflict on you his spring replacement, a visiting professor, a crackpot from South Africa who thinks that the Bantu are one of the lost tribes of Israel, Anglo-Saxon poetry derives from the lost tribes of Israel, and a kenning is not a metaphor.

Need I add that, as time went by, I began to suspect that I would be a volunteer for death? This in spite of charming fellow students, two whiz-bang seminars (one taught by Harold Bloom, another by Paul Fry), and my pride. During the spring term, I began my slide into long days spent in bed reading Dickens—and not for class. I just thought reading Dickens would be a good idea, as it was then and is now. I read every novel except *Barnaby Rudge*. I think all the copies were out of the library.

On the day I decided to leave Yale I started to write poems again, for the first time in many months. I saw this as an omen, a promise to myself that I would not pinch and stuff my art and my intellect into preexisting molds, that I would not submit my thoughts and love for literature to the scrutiny of the cruel and the foolish, that I would try to direct my own life in literature as a reader and a writer, and above all—as I then thought—that I would never darken academia's gates again.

The old dream of the liberal arts education was to make college students into generalists who would, as the song says, "know a little bit about a lot of things." One can make the claim, which is by no means original, that what is wrong with graduate education, at least in the humanities, is the model of science-like specialization applied to fields where it is inappropriate—and where, moreover, this specialization of Ph.D.'s may actually render them unfit to teach undergraduates. It's not blowing the lid off a big secret to point out that universities have a hard time convincing professors to teach introductory or survey courses; or that small liberal arts colleges often struggle with the difficulty of providing a broad education in literature because their faculty wants to teach specialized, graduate seminar courses to unprepared and ignorant college students. Why should a sophomore—who has read only one Shakespeare play, never heard of Chaucer or Herbert, and thinks Jane Austen is for girls—be thought fit for a class in "hypertext" or Foucault?

Unknotting this problem is not simple—and I would like to emphasize that my evidence is entirely anecdotal—but perhaps at its heart is the conundrum of who becomes a teacher, and why. When I sailed off to graduate school, I really had no idea of being a teacher. Although teaching as an assistant in undergraduate courses was a coveted job, there was as far as I remember no preparation, no helpful hints or even the suggestion that real teaching (engaged teaching, impassioned teaching) was demanding and difficult. That one could think about the life of a professor as *primarily* engaged with teaching was, I think I can safely say, anathema.

My eventual route to becoming a college teacher of literature was through my writing and was essentially by accident. It turns out that aspiring writers will take classes from writers who have published books—and so the Ninety-second Street YMCA in New York asked me to teach a class after I had published a book of poems. It was 1992; I was at that time working, as I had been for a decade, as a magazine editor and book reviewer.

Here are some things I remember about my first class: among about a dozen students were two outrageously talented young poets who later went on to publish excellent first books and could have done so without the least bit of help from me; a woman who centered all her poems on the page like greeting cards; a man who wrote about drinking, both his own and that of famous writers; a boy not out of high school who wrote "randomized" poems

> *My own experience is that a certain kind of genius among students is best brought out in bed.*
> *—Allen Ginsberg, 1981*

that sometimes were only punctuation and who had not yet heard of the Dadaists; and an older woman who wrote about trees.

I was confident of only one thing: the best help I could give these students was to tell them what to read. Some of them hadn't read anything; none had read enough. I assured them that I, too, had not read enough. I reserved a time for each class to talk about what we were reading. Only the unconscious Dadaist and the two stars took my suggestions.

Sometimes light would break when we talked about their poems. Mostly we just slogged on through. I did not enforce "positive" remarks, but I did enforce tact. Often I was the only one with anything to say. And yet something happened to me—I got the idea that I could be a teacher.

Now, just like lots of Ph.D.'s, lots of writers make lousy teachers. They seek teaching jobs because of the income, because our culture does not support artists, and because they can't think of anything else to do. Plenty of them would be doing everybody a big favor if they'd just become veterinarians or landscape gardeners or sell popcorn at the movies. But some of us are also real teachers. I know a novelist who can manhandle a student and a manuscript until that student is a writer and that manuscript is a story. I know a poet who can listen and then alight on the poem with the right question, on

the exact right word, that turns the student into a thinking, listening writer herself.

As for me, what I am really good for is teaching literature. I started knowing it at the YMCA, and then in the days that I taught a couple of courses to undergraduates at Barnard, and then in the stint I had of three years at Amherst College as a visiting writer. Although there has been less time for dawdling in cafes than one might have hoped, I discovered that, after all, I like the life of academia for the same reason I liked it as a college student: I am learning all the time. I now teach literature at Bennington College, where there is a longstanding tradition, since the school's founding in the 1930s, of John Dewey's ideal of the "teacher practitioner," and where all of my colleagues in literature are also (nonacademic) writers, and few if any of us have Ph.D.'s.

No man who worships education has got the best out of education. Without a gentle contempt for education no man's education is complete.
—G.K. Chesterton, 1930

I also teach graduate students in writing and literature in a low-residency MFA program that convenes twice a year in Bennington for workshops and lectures and that conducts most of its instruction through the mail. And every term, for the graduation ceremonies, I put on my plain black robe, unadorned by the colorful hood that would tell the world of an M.A., an MFA, or a Ph.D., and take my place. Sometimes I feel defiant, sometimes I feel sad or embarrassed or replete with irony, but I always feel *something* about my students receiving a degree that puts them, in the academic hierarchy, above me.

One of the ways I like to describe what I do—that is, how a writer teaching literature does it differently than a regular academic does—is by saying that I start with the two basic hermeneutical questions, "What does the text say?" and "What does it mean?" but then go on to ask the question, "How did the writer do it?" Examining the choices that the writer makes—this aside here, two villains there, a weak hero, an odd rhyme, a flashback, a third-person alternating with a first-person narrator, free verse, prose poem—is essential to how I teach, with the writer at the center of the discussion.

It is not my intention here to propose sweeping policy changes for the academy. Some of my best friends have Ph.D.'s and teach, brilliantly—although I am inclined to think that this might be in spite of their training. But there might be sense in rethinking who teaches literature to college students, and perhaps one way is by deploring the relentless trend of academically inspired contempt for the writer. It is almost impossible to imagine an art historian, say, talking about a Caravaggio without some mention of "the color he used here" or "how he focused on this aspect of the Biblical story." And yet the author of a novel is not usually taken into account with the same respect in a literature class. No doubt because academic critics of literature must themselves *write*, and yet for the most part cannot write the poems, plays, or novels they are writing about, they are afflicted with a built-in competitiveness with authors. That the great ones rise above this—I am thinking of one of the finest books I know, by the late Yale professor Richard Gilman on Chekhov, as a perfect example—does not obviate the central problem.

Despite the stranglehold that the "Ph.D. Octopus," as William James called it, still has on the economics of who gets hired to teach, my experience at Bennington gives me hope that perhaps other enlightened institutions will also discover that having a Ph.D. may have nothing to do with loving literature and being able to teach it well.

I am a hopeless romantic, and a hopeful democrat. I always tell students that Shakespeare already belongs to them as their inheritance, but that they have to do the work to own him. Literature does not belong to the academy, it belongs to each of us; and the right teachers—in or out of the academy—are the ones who can show us how to take it, and own it, for ourselves.

The Wounded Man, self-portrait by Gustave Courbet, c. 1844–1854.

PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST

by Howard Singerman

The Weimar Bauhaus was founded in 1919 on the premise that art "cannot be taught and cannot be learned." Art is not "a profession which can be mastered by study," wrote Walter Gropius in the school's first program; rather, it blossoms "in rare moments of inspiration" by "the grace of heaven." That Gropius launched what would become the most influential art school of the twentieth century on such contradictory grounds underscores the problem implicit in the teaching of art. Gropius was not the first to claim that art cannot be taught, and its corollary, the ideal of the "born artist," runs long and deep in the current of Western civilization. Pliny the Elder asserted in the first century that the Greek sculptor Lysippus "was no one's pupil"; Albrecht Dürer, in the sixteenth century, praised the Dutch artist Geertgen tot Sint Jans as "truly a painter in his mother's womb." The tradition continues into the present with the art historian Robert Pincus-Witten's description in the early 1980s of David Salle as a "painter born." And yet most artists from Lysippus forward have been someone's pupil; David Salle's Master of Fine Arts degree is only the latest way that the title of artist is bestowed.

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From the early Middle Ages, young artists apprenticed in workshops. Some of them were based in a monastery or a palace, but most belonged to the *bottegas* [studios] of individual masters. Guilds set the terms of apprenticeship and decided when the students were skilled enough to work as journeymen, and then as masters—professional artists—themselves. Karl van Mander, who recorded Dürer's tribute to Geertgen, clarified in his 1604 *Schilder-Boeck* that Geertgen had been a pupil of the painter

The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done.

—Jean Piaget

Albert van Ouwater. Dürer, too, was a pupil, apprenticed for three years to a painter named Michael Wohlgemuth, and before that, to his own father, a goldsmith. Like many artists—most notably the elder and younger Pieter Bruegels and the Hans Holbeins—Dürer was born into a family of artists and skilled craftsmen. His artistic lineage speaks less to the imaginary genetics at play in the womb than to the economics of his family's business, passing on from generation to generation its recipes, tools, and representational types.

The founding of the first academies in the sixteenth century and their flowering in the seventeenth under state sponsorship proceeded from the idea that there is more to be taught, and more to being an artist, than practical training. Insistent upon the separation of art as a *cosa mentale* from the manual skills of the workshop, the academies were in fact founded to produce that difference. *Bottega* apprentices worked for and on a master's products—grinding paints, preparing grounds, laying in backgrounds or compositions according to existing models or templates. The academy's students studied the principles of art. "Study first the science, then the practice born of that science," Leonardo da Vinci advised in a treatise circulated in manuscript that intended to elevate painting above the mechanical arts and to raise the artist above those artisans with whom he had shared his guild membership. Leonardo's first principles were not manual or material, but rather those of *disegno*: point, line, surface, and the body enclosed by that line.

The first official academy was Giorgio Vasari's Accademia del Disegno, founded in Florence in 1563 with the support of the Medicis. Drawing was the core of its teaching. Accompanied by lectures in the new sciences of anatomy and perspective, the posed nude came to define the academy and what was meant by "fine art" for the next three centuries. The French Académie Royale, the strongest and most influential academy in Europe, was founded in 1648 with the exclusive right to pose the nude model, and *académie* came to mean both the institution and the drawing that was taught there. Two hundred years later, in 1863, when new generations of theorists threatened to bring practical studio classes on painting, sculpture, architecture, and engraving into the Académie's École des Beaux-Arts, the academician Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres argued that the École "teaches only drawing, but drawing is everything; it is the whole of art. The material processes of painting are very simple, and can be taught in eight hours."

The battle cry for the reformers of the École des Beaux-Arts was "*Utilité!*" and the 1863 reforms, however small, were but a part of a broad movement across Europe. Parliamentarians, manufacturers, educators, and myriad writers on the arts all sought to rationalize art education in general, and to make it more responsive to the commercial needs of the state. The establishment of the *Gewerbeschulen* in Germany and schools of design in England in the 1830s and '40s were attempts to replace the collapsed guild-based apprenticeship system and adapt to the new conditions of industrial manufacture. These schools eschewed life drawing: students in the British schools early on had to declare that they were not studying to be artists.

The new schools taught a very different kind of drawing—mechanical drawing—to a clientele identified in the title of the main course at London's Central School of Design at Somerset

House as "Designers, Ornamentists, and Those Intending to Be Industrial Artists." The course employed a regularly stepped syllabus, from repeated drills in straight and curved lines to copies of geometric figures in plane. The student's principal three-dimensional model was not the nude but "type solids"—cubes, cones, cylinders, spheres—and plaster casts of architectural ornament. By 1880, the Central School of Design's curricula were in use at forty-seven hundred elementary schools. For the proponents of the schools of design, the academic drawing that Ingres insisted was the "whole of art" was useless: not only for the young industrial artist or factory draftsman, but increasingly for those who would be painters or sculptors. The academy's concentration on drawing and the human figure came to be seen as meaningless and isolating, a view that cemented the old division between artist and artisan along the class lines of modern industrial society.

It was precisely this division that Gropius intended the Bauhaus to heal. "There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman," he declared in his 1919 manifesto. Dismissing both the old academy model and the new regimented design classroom, he concluded by appealing to the vision of the medieval guild: "There are no teachers and pupils at the Bauhaus, but masters, journeymen, and apprentices." But Gropius' apprentices could no longer become twelfth-century stonecutters, and by the time of the Bauhaus' move to Dessau in 1925, its ideal craftsman was an industrial designer, fashioning objects in metal, glass, and plastic for industrial production. Like Leonardo before him, Gropius insisted on first principles, but his were not those of *disegno* as figurative representation—a copy of this world made beautiful—but rather of design as the projection of a new world. Those principles were established in the Bauhaus' famous *Vorkurs*, the foundation course taught over the years by Johannes Itten, Josef Albers, and László Moholy-Nagy. A comprehensive curriculum organized by materials and procedures followed from that foundation, a technique-based syllabus borrowed from the *Gewerbeschulen* and a format now standard in American art schools and university art departments.

The Bauhaus closed in 1933, and over the next decade the emigration of many of its most prominent faculty members to the United States helped to transform American art education. Albers started at Black Mountain College in 1933 and was appointed head of the school of design at Yale in 1950; Gropius himself was at Harvard by 1937; Moholy-Nagy founded the New Bauhaus in Chicago that same year. Taken as an exemplar of modern, rational art education, the Bauhaus was singularly influential in the quest to bring the practice of art into colleges and universities in the form of both general education and professional training—premised on Moholy-Nagy's idea that "any healthy man can become a musician, painter, sculptor, or architect." The first Master of Fine Arts degree was probably awarded at the University of Washington in 1924, but it was only in the years after World War II that the MFA became a recognizable part of the American university. There are now over two hundred degree-granting graduate studio art programs, the majority established since 1970.

> *University degrees are a bit like adultery: you may not want to get involved with that sort of thing, but you don't want to be thought incapable.*
> —*Peter Imbert, 1992*

The history of art education from the guild to the university suggests a coherent trajectory: the increasingly formalized training of the artist as a professional. But open to the education pages of *Art Digest* from September 15, 1948, and there is another side to the story. The four-page spread includes advertisements for over seventy art schools, including academies, ateliers, and studios offering correspondence courses. Among the columns of ads, two now can be seen as historically pertinent. One is an announcement for the newly formed National Association of Schools of Design, an accrediting association founded to align art education with university admissions, degree standards,

core requirements, and regularized credit hours. The other is the announcement of a new art school located at 35 East Eighth Street in Greenwich Village, New York City.

The second ad listed four names: Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, William Baziotes, and David Hare. Two of those names now read as shorthand for the Abstract Expressionist movement, but all of them would, at the time, have been as unfamiliar as the school's odd name: Subjects of the Artist. Clyfford Still was involved with the school's earliest planning, before it received its name, to which he strongly objected. Barnett Newman, who coined the name "to emphasize that abstract art, too, had a subject," was added to the list of teachers for the school's second term in January 1949. Tucked between an ad for the Workshop School, which promised "not theoretical instruction, but really practical training and experience," and one for the Ozenfant School, "the leading school of modern art," the ad for Subjects of the Artist promised "A New Kind of Art School."

Bees are sometimes drowned (or suffocated) in the honey which they collect. So some writers are lost in their collected learning.

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1842

It's not clear what its founders meant when they labeled Subjects of the Artist a new kind of art school. Institutionally it looked more like the old-fashioned ateliers in the adjacent advertisements than the university art departments. Stylistically there were other, already established choices available for those interested in modern painting; not only Amédée Ozenfant's school but also Hans Hofmann's, presented in an even bigger ad across the page. Hofmann, who eventually taught a whole host of artists who have become household names—among them Lee Krasner, Helen Frankenthaler, and Allan Kaprow—is as important to the development of American art education as the Bauhaus that produced him. He was certainly more important than Subjects of the Artist, which was something of a failure: the school ran for three ten-week terms before closing in May 1949, and had perhaps seventeen regular students.

Still, Subjects of the Artist is worth spending some time with because it marks the emergence of what Clyfford Still once called "the discipline of speaking"—the critiques, conversations, and visiting-artist presentations that now characterize much graduate training. According to the one-page catalogue Robert Motherwell wrote for Subjects of the Artist, there were "no formal courses" and "no technical requirements." The school's curriculum was based neither in drawing nor in métier, but in language—as it hovers around a work of art or moves away from it toward broader, more philosophical questions: questions that students had to construe and to answer for themselves. "They changed me completely," a student later recalled. "Now I had to destroy the object, get rid of horizon, and not use any literary subject either." What was worked on at Subjects of the Artist—what was taught and formed—was not the work of art (which is, after all, remembered only as what had to be destroyed) but the artist himself. In the words of the painter Robert Goodnough, who, it is worth noting, puts the word curriculum in quotes: "The 'curriculum' consisted of the subjects that interest advanced artists"—a teaching that sets itself against the sort of correction that characterized the academy, and one that contradicts the idea of basic principles, whether of Leonardo's *disegno* or the Bauhaus' design.

Rothko quite explicitly rejected the Bauhaus' order and its foundations, which in a way helps to explain why Subjects of the Artist called itself "A New Art School." Hired by Brooklyn College's Bauhaus-inspired design department shortly after Subjects closed in 1949, Rothko, when his contract was not renewed, wrote a letter to the department lambasting the dogmatic utilitarianism of what he had been asked to teach, protesting, "It is only by the circumvention of the real intent of the Bauhaus ideology of the courses in Basic Design, Drawing, Color 1 & 2 that I have been able to lay before my students what really I felt had to be said.... I was not brought into this

department because I am primarily a teacher or an advertising man or a textile man. I was asked to join the department because I am Mark Rothko and the lifelong integrity and intensity which my work represents." Rothko's switch from questions of métier—being defined by craft skill—to the question of artistic identity—of what and how one is an artist—is clear.

Rothko's complaint sounds like that of a romantic artist—and indeed, it is—but it is also pragmatic. Unequipped with the traditional training an artist might have needed when he was first hired to teach Brooklyn College's graphic workshop, he enrolled in a printmaking class uptown at the Art Students League to learn what he was supposed to teach. None of the founders of Subjects of the Artist had received the extensive instruction given to Hofmann in the ateliers of Munich and Paris. In public statements and comments to their students they denied its value. About a year before Subjects opened, Rothko insisted in an interview that he was a self-taught artist, which was only a slight exaggeration. His institutional training amounted to eight months at the Art Students League between 1924 and 1926: two months studying anatomy with George Bridgeman, the remaining six painting still lifes with Max Weber. His two years as a liberal arts student at Yale in the early 1920s encompassed neither studio art nor art history.

Robert Motherwell's art school instruction was even spottier. He did not spend a full year at either the Otis Art Institute in 1926, at age eleven, or the California School of Fine Arts in 1932. He attempted Stanford's art department as an undergraduate in the early thirties, but, according to the art historian H.H. Arnason, "he was told by one instructor that his work was 'too blunt and coarse.'... Nevertheless, he is grateful to that same instructor for advising him to read Proust." Motherwell graduated from Stanford in philosophy and pursued a graduate degree in philosophy at Harvard before leaving to study art history at Columbia with Meyer Schapiro. Like Rothko, Motherwell became a relatively regular art student only after he became a teacher. He began to paint daily only after a family friend helped him secure a one-year teaching position at the University of Oregon in 1939.

In contrast to Motherwell, Rothko, and the sculptor David Hare, all of whom had first attended university to pursue a career other than art, William Baziotes, the last of Subjects of the Artist's first-term teachers, had a traditional and formal art education. He attended the venerable National Academy of Design from 1933 to 1936, where he studied anatomy and drew after casts, after the masters, and after the model. But in the context of the Subjects of the Artist, Baziotes' academic training can be read among the other biographies as simply another way: another example of not knowing how to go about becoming an artist.

> *The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught as that every child should be given the wish to learn.*
>
> *—John Lubbock, 1887*

Barnett Newman, also in the Subjects faculty, studied on and off at the Art Students League like many would-be artists in New York City in the 1920s and 1930s, and he did so for a good deal longer than Rothko. He attended classes while still a high school student from 1922 to 1926 and returned in 1929 after graduating in philosophy from City College. None of Newman's paintings and few of his drawings from the period survive; in the early 1940s, he destroyed as much of his earlier work as he could locate. It was as though he was attempting to start from scratch as an artist without a school. A critic once described those early efforts as "all-thumbs drawings," a description that along with Motherwell's "blunt and coarse" style suggests that at some point *not* drawing—not only not being schooled but not being able to be schooled—was part of the promise of Subjects of the Artist. Hare recalls that Newman would assure his Subjects of the Artist students, "I can't draw at all."

It's a handicap—a drawback, so to speak—

reflected in Newman's teaching as well as in the Subjects' curriculum. "Unlike a truly professional teacher such as Hans Hofmann," Hare recounts, Newman "never drew or painted on a student's work to correct it. Newman was content to talk about art in a general theoretical way." Hofmann was infamous for graphically correcting student work—a leftover, perhaps, of a long tradition formalized in the nineteenth-century French atelier as the *séance de correction*, a term referring both to the master's weekly visit and his intervention on student's drawing. In contrast to Hofmann, and to the nineteenth-century master, what the Subjects of the Artist faculty did was talk. Rothko "could talk endlessly and very brilliantly and poetically and metaphorically and mysteriously," recalled one of his students.

In March 1949, two months before Subjects was to close, Motherwell described the school and its program to the annual Conference of the Committee on Art Education. "The way to learn to paint—to begin one's orientation, I mean—is to hang around artists. We have made a place where young people can do so.... We talk to students as we do to one another." Subjects of the Artist was first and foremost a place to be with artists, to talk with them, to see what they are like—and to see if you are like them. Learning to become an artist was not the same as learning to make art, or learning the skills of representation. At Subjects of the Artist, the student came to learn if he or she *was* an artist. Motherwell also stressed the conjunction of talk and proximity, and the value of milieu in the school's catalogue. "Those who are in the learning stage benefit most by associating with working artists," for it is only through that association that they can learn "what his subjects are, how they are arrived at, methods of inspiration and transformation, moral attitudes, possibilities for further explorations...."

This, too, is a kind of apprenticeship. Like Gropius, but to very different ends, Motherwell questioned the traditional identifications of teacher and pupil, putting scare quotes around students, as Goodnough had around curriculum: "Those attending the classes will not be treated as 'students' in the conventional manner, but as collaborators with the artists in the investigation of the artistic process, its modern conditions, possibilities, and extreme nature, through discussions and practice." His promise that students would be treated as artistic collaborators is now commonplace. When the California Institute of the Arts opened in 1970, it did not put off the question of being an artist until after graduation; its initial catalogue pledged that "from the day he enters, the student is an artist." The question was no longer one of practice, but of being: of being an artist in the eyes of one's teachers, and in the mirror. By the time the Los Angeles sculptor Charles Ray repeated the argument in an article for *Spin* magazine on the art school boom of the late 1990s, the distinction between being and becoming a professional had collapsed: "Most art schools are about students and teachers. UCLA is about artists working as artists.... The reason the kids here are getting all this early success is because they're not art students, they're young artists. Young artists get galleries. Students study."

Ray sounds flippant, but he's not wrong. It's not that our art schools have nothing to teach young students, but rather that there is no particular thing that needs to be learned. There is no longer any particular set of skills that must be taught in order for art—at least as we have thought of it for the past century—to be made. And if artists are not defined by their talents or licensed by their skills, then perhaps it does come down, as Subjects of the Artist insisted it does, to a question of being around them. Or as Harold Rosenberg suggested in his canonical 1952 essay "The American Action Painters," a piece that tried to describe the concerns and the studio talk of artists like those on the faculty at Subjects, it might be a matter of acting out the identity of the artist: "What gives the canvas its meaning is not psychological data but *rôle*...." An artist need only act as an artist to become one—which is a far more difficult proposition than it sounds when it is no longer clear what an artist is, and maybe even more difficult than learning how to draw.

The Fisherman, by Carl Schuster, inspired by Franz Schubert's song about a fisherman's encounter with a water nymph.

CATCH AND RELEASE

by D. Graham Burnett

John Steinbeck—bitten, improbably enough, by a youthful bug for marine biology—found himself in the spring of 1940 on a chartered sardine boat with the invertebrate taxonomist Ed Ricketts, en route to the waters of Baja California, Mexico, to noodle in the tide pools for unknown life forms. But they were after much bigger game than the specimens they planned to stuff in little jars. At the start of *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*, Steinbeck's book about their "expedition" (or was it a jaunt?), the king of Cannery Row insisted that he and his new pal Ricketts were after nothing less than a whole new way of *learning about the world*. Here's the pitch:

> We said, "Let's go wide open. Let's see what we see, record what we find, and not fool ourselves with conventional scientific strictures." We could not observe a completely objective Sea of Cortez anyway, for in that lonely and uninhabited Gulf our boat and ourselves would change it the moment we entered.

Call it the Heisenberg uncertainty principle of the field trip. Mounting a full-bore attack on bookish objectivity and the closeted university types who went in for it, Steinbeck suddenly turned and gave ichthyologists (of all people) a few good kicks, in a passage that has become legendary among fish biologists and the students who dislike them. The subject is the seemingly innocuous taxonomic technique for identifying

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fish by means of the count of their fin spines—an undertaking Steinbeck casts as the epitome of the desiccated learning of the schools:

> [T]he Mexican sierra has "XVII-15-IX" spines in the dorsal fin. These can easily be counted. But if the sierra strikes hard on the line so that our hands are burned, if the fish sounds and nearly escapes and finally comes in over the rail, his colors pulsing and his tail beating the air, a whole new relational externality has come into being—an entity which is more than the sum of the fish plus the fisherman. The only way to count the spines of the sierra unaffected by this second relational reality is to sit in a laboratory, open an evil-smelling jar, remove a stiff colorless fish from formalin solution, count the spines, and write the truth: "D. XVII-15-IX." There you have recorded a reality which cannot be assailed—probably the least important reality concerning either the fish or yourself.

He and Ricketts, Steinbeck hastily assures the reader, were going to *catch* some sierra—and they were going to *eat them too*, calloused hands still bleeding from the naked line. Now that's real knowledge, and the manly men that make and share it: no roof, no chair, no books.

It's a somewhat goofy passage, to be sure, but I had trouble getting it out of my head one hot afternoon in the late summer of 2004, when, standing on a sandy spit in the Sea of Cortez, I landed my first Mexican sierra—a toothy, fifteen-inch torpedo of mercurial muscle speckled with yellow coins. After all, I was myself on what could (only charitably) be called an expedition—as an instructor in a two-week intensive university course on marine ecology. Together with a dozen Stanford undergraduates and a few fellow teachers, I had spent the morning diving one of the very reefs where Ricketts and Steinbeck once plucked tubeworms, mused about metaphysics, and drank warm beer (they did a lot of this). And I would return after my fishing excursion to our field station—a weathered building of termite-nibbled beams and hewn tuff, erected nearly a century ago as the headquarters of a mining company, but long since abandoned to itinerant biologists—for a lecture about fish genetics in a room lined with formalin jars, each haunted by a lurid piscine sprite.

Despite a certain boozy bravado and slightly woozy postpositivism, Steinbeck had sunk his hooks into some fundamental problems, problems that suddenly stood out sharply against the pink desert hills and cold blue water: What is knowledge, and how do we get it? Why do we go into classrooms, and when must we leave them behind?

Gingerly easing the lure from the lower jaw, I knelt in the shallows to perform the ritual of artificial resuscitation peculiar to sensitive fly-fishermen everywhere: "Hello there, sorry about that, back and forth, let's get some fresh water through those gills—there we go, off with you…" And then I broke down my rod, shouldered my pack, and started the long hike back around the bay to our camp-style classroom, thinking, as I trudged the strand, about the seminar and the lecture, the field trip and those bleeding hands.

The seminar and the lecture. "Seminar" sounds a good deal like "seminary," an etymological link that reaches back to the monkish roots of modern liberal learning. Not that there were any seminars in the seminaries. Or in the universities either, at least not until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The pedagogical mise en scène of premodern education was the lecture hall: no inviting table around which minds might meet; rather, a pulpit of sorts, elevated before hard benches. That word "lecture," too, enunciates its conditions of origin—from the Latin *lego, legere, legi, lectus*, meaning "to read." A lecture was a "reading," specifically a reading from a book. In a world before printing, this sort of recitation drew crowds, since only a few folks had books, and their willingness to share them was an occasion to bring a sheaf of paper and a fresh-cut quill.

From a sandy spit in Bahía de los Ángeles, it all felt, for a moment, quite insane: How could it be that the basic life form of university instruction (the lecture) remained more or less unchanged from its archaic condition, in which textual scarcity convened classrooms that were a little like ill-lit steno pools of unbathed medieval adolescents destined for the priesthood? A glance from the back of a modern lecture hall, where some 60 percent of the students will be surfing the Web at any given moment, suggests that the method is well on its way to extinction. After all, MIT, Stanford, Berkeley, Purdue, and plenty of other schools have videotaped their great lecturers, making them available online. Anecdotal reports suggest, unsurprisingly, that those classrooms are now empty ("I'll watch it on my iPod, thanks!"). With a selection of theatrical, high-production-value lectures in an array of fields all available on YouTube, the university will very likely cease to be a relevant venue for such instruction. We professors fret about this from time to time, watching the enrollments of our big lecture classes dwindle to friendly handfuls of freshmen, but it is not clear anyone really cares. We mostly don't like lecturing anyway.

What we like are seminars—the intimate gathering, the texts in everyone's hand, the round table, the promise of a certain kind of conversation. So natural to us is this style of learning that it's a surprise to consider how recent such scenes are in the history of education. After all, the Peripatetics of Greek antiquity believed, as their name implies, that intellectual investigation happened while walking—so no chairs around tables for them. And their critics, the Stoics, had the convenient idea that one only really began to make sense of things *lying down*—so they, too, would have found little use for our seminar rooms, absent a lot more couches. Finally, the medieval magister would have wondered at the idea that any form of education could proceed by open-ended exchange—if his students spoke, it was to ventriloquize a carefully rehearsed position in a formal disputation, not to muse about what came to mind while reading Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.

But historians of education have reconstructed how we got going on the round-table pedagogy of the seminar. It was (in the storybook version) a clique of romantic German philologists in Göttingen around 1790 who first rearranged the benches in the classroom, and, in doing so, the very idea of intellectual inquiry. Sure, there had been charismatic teachers before that, and long evening chats in the spirit of Socrates, but for most of European history, "learning" meant reading the books. Since there weren't many of them, and since they were a mess (full of copyist's errors and corruptions), a professor's job was to tell you what they said. For this you went to lecture. By 1790, however, everyone could peruse a cheap and serviceable edition of Livy, and so what Livy actually wrote was no longer a very interesting question, even for a classical philologist. But a new problem arose very quickly: What the hell did Livy *mean?* Or, to put it a different way, now that we all had the book in front of us, how come we couldn't agree about what it said? Thus the seminar was born—as a site for interpretation, as a new space for the triangulation of self and text, as an altar-in-the-round for the sacrament of uncertainty.

Repetition is the mother of education.
—Jean Paul Richter, 1807

The fieldtrip and the bleeding hands. Those German romantics liked the woods. They liked mountain tops. Eventually they even liked the beach—preferably near Naples, and ideally where there were some ruins, among which they could take out their Livy, arrange themselves under that Latin sun, and really *feel* it.

The idea that knowledge is acquired in the "field"—on site, under the open sky, and not in the library or the university—was born and reared in the age of empire, which connected travel and learning in radical new ways. It was the nascent natural sciences that insisted most volubly on their being excused from school: young Darwin, liberated from the tedium of cramming Latinity at

Cambridge, took a glorious ramble with his geology professor through Wales, swinging his hammer and thinking about the structure and history of the globe. He would continue those reflections to considerable effect on the ur-field trip—the five-year circumnavigating voyage of the *Beagle*. Setting sail from Plymouth in December 1831 at the tender age of twenty-two (and under a captain only a few years his senior), Darwin shook the library dust from his waistcoat, breathed deep of the salt air, and vomited like a geyser (it turned out he was enormously susceptible to motion sickness). No matter. He was following in the wake of his hero, Alexander von Humboldt, the titanic German explorer-naturalist-romantic who had tramped through South America a few decades earlier, and raised thinking in the field to a high art. Like him, Darwin would sit beneath spreading palm trees in the tropics and moon about the meaning of nature.

Though Darwin missed Baja for the most part (crossing the Pacific below the equator), we would on this trip retrace his spiritual trajectory, arranging ourselves under a whispy salt cedar to read excerpts from his *On the Origin of Species*. The aim: to consider, seminar-style, not only what this young naturalist saw in his peregrinations but also how his peregrinations helped him see. Here was the uncertainty principle of the field trip on magnificent display, and a traveler who knew—swatting with his bare hands little birds made fearless by generations on an uninhabited island—that by going into the world, he was absolutely changing it. Indeed, the changing of the world was what the travel helped him grasp in a revolutionary way.

Camped in the pampas, climbing volcanoes, weathering a Cape Horn storm, one learned not merely with books but with the body: with tongue and thumb, ear and arm. There is a famous anecdote about Darwin's return to England: his father, a distinguished doctor, looked up from the breakfast table at the young man and announced, "Why, the shape of his head is quite altered!" For a devotee of phrenology, this was saying something specific about his son's intellectual development, but Darwin senior was also saying that he saw a body transformed by the labor of learning. And this was a commonplace of the traveler, who returned marked by his experience: snowblindness and scars, malarial fevers and tattoos. These were the stigmata of those who suffered for what they knew. They would lord it over the schoolmen for the rest of their lives.

Back at the field station, the sun has dropped behind the stony crest of the peninsula. Students lie here and there on wooden cots, some sleeping, some reading from the course packet, some staring out at the sea, watching the birds dive for herring. Through the open doorway of the station house I can see my colleague setting up for lecture, arranging the benches around the makeshift lectern, and shuffling his notes. It is time, once again, for class. Today's lesson: speciation among the bony fishes.

This morning, though, at sunrise, we split the glazed sea in a pair of Pangas, riding out to

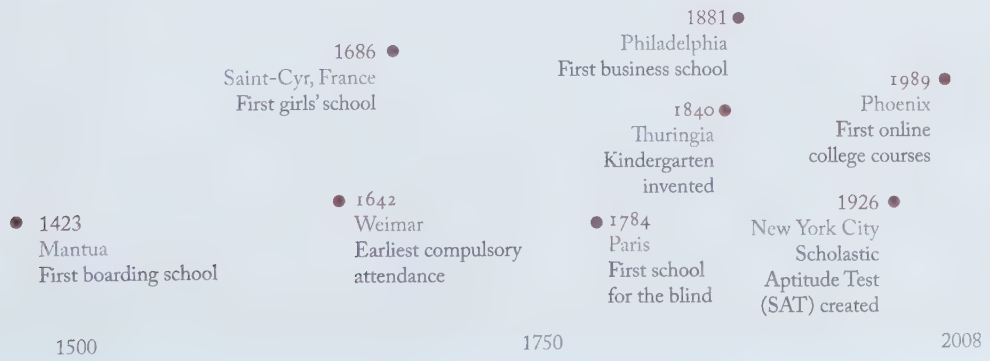
A Short History of Schooling

the channel to watch a pair of Bryde's whales lunge into boils of bait fish and baby tuna. First, at the surface, the fizzy hiss of tight-schooled fry; then, the slashing irruption of the skipjack in pursuit; and finally, terrifying and glorious, a columnar explosion as the whale breached in the center of the whirlpool—leaping straight up in a giant gulp, its baggy lower jaw distended with water and life.

What did we learn from this? I am afraid I cannot say, but I do know that much of what passes for knowledge can now be Googled. This is already changing the university, since every student with a laptop can check every fact offered in lecture in real time, and anyone bored in seminar can take a moment to price tickets to Cabo or Boca. Where it will eventually lead us is, at this point in the proceedings, anyone's guess. One can wonder, though. If the revolution of the printing press wrested the seminar out of the lecture hall (installing collaborative hermeneutics in the place of ex cathedra orthodoxy), then perhaps the electronic revolution will flush the seminar out of doors, returning us, in a way, to the pedagogical condition of the Peripatetics, those who knew to wander when it was time to teach and learn.

Already classes like ours, "field classes," are an increasingly important component of many curricula. And this is more, I think, than a move to satisfy our consumer-students with vacations for credit. Yes, there are the boondoggles in Florence and the cruise-ship semesters for the coddled (students and parents alike), but there are also serious efforts being made to turn the university inside out: to send Ethics 101 into the emergency room; the politics class to Newark; the budding economists to the Lower Ninth Ward; and yes, the biologists to Baja. These courses can be demanding and memorable—occasions for camaraderie, fear, fecund lassitude, surprise, and the forms of Eros that originally animated the desire to know. The glory of such a class, when it works, is the unexpected linking of head and hand, of body and mind, of teacher and student, of knowledge and experience. In a world where learning can mostly be downloaded, real thinking requires strategies for escape.

I take a quick dip before heading into lecture, and the water is punitive, icy, invigorating. One more time I shake the Steinbeck through my head: his juxtaposition between the fish in the hand and the fish in the jar was never quite right. We don't need manly fishermen in the ponds of knowledge (snagging and gobbling); neither do we need pedants of the known (hoarding their decomposing booty). After all, these seeming antitheses are more alike than different: both are, in the end, techniques of amassing; both are, in the end, greedy and possessive; both are, in the end, stuck in their ways. Neither knows how to come and go, how to touch things lightly, how to leave the best for others, how to look sideways, how to slip away. What we really need is something like the pedagogical equivalent of catch and release: "Hello there, sorry about that, let's get some fresh water through those gills, back and forth—there we go, off with you...." This could well be the future of higher education.



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Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them right. —*Thomas Jefferson, 1789*

Statue of Buddha, monastery of Tapa Kalan, Afghanistan, found in 1923.

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